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THE BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR.

ST. LUKE.

CHAPTER XIV.

VERS. 1-6. He went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees.—*The gospel for the seventeenth Sunday after Trinity*.—I. WE HERE BEHOLD OUR SAVIOUR IN THE SOCIAL CIRCLE. Jesus was not a recluse. He had a kind and social heart. He came to instruct, benefit, and redeem men, and He took pleasure in mingling with them. With all His holiness, majesty, and glory, He was a meek and social being, worthy of all admiration and imitation. II. WE HERE HAVE A REMARKABLE TESTIMONY TO CHRIST'S GOODNESS. There is reason to suspect that His invitation to this Pharisee's house was for no friendly purpose. The Pharisees, as a class, hated Jesus, and were intent upon bringing Him into condemnation; and this man had distinguished friends with him on this occasion, who were no exception. This is proven from what occurred when they all got together in the house. Immediately in front of Christ, and in a manner thrust upon His notice, was "a certain man that had the dropsy." How he got there is to be inferred. Evidently he was placed there to tempt our Lord to commit Himself. Yes, even their hard and bitter hearts were so assured of the Saviour's goodness, that they felt warranted in building on it their plot to ruin Him. Sabbath day as it was, their convictions were deep and positive that He would not pass by the opportunity for exercising his marvellous power to cure the invalid they had stationed before Him. And that one incidental fact speaks volumes. It tells of the constant stream of healing power dispensed by the Saviour whosoever He went. As the very cloud that would cover the sun with darkness bears the bow which the more beautifully reflects his glory, so the very wrath and malignity of these designing hypocrites did the more magnificently attest the gracious goodness of our Lord. Nor did they miscalculate. Knowing full well the nature and intent of the arrangement, and comprehending all the ill use the treacherous watchers around Him meant to make of it, He did not flinch from His wont, nor suffer His merciful power to be diverted or constrained. III. BUT HOW BASE THE COWARDICE BROUGHT BEFORE US IN THE CONDUCT OF THESE MEN! To wish to unseat and injure one of whose goodness they were so thoroughly convinced, was in itself a self-contradictory wickedness almost beyond comprehension. Shame on a zeal that attaches sanctity to such hypocrisy, or honour to such cowardice! IV. WE HERE BEHOLD THE TRUE SPIRIT OF THE LAW. The Sabbath was not ordained for itself and its own sake; nor as a mere arbitrary act of Divine sovereignty; but for the good of the living beings concerned in its observance. V. WE LIKEWISE BEHOLD FROM THIS NARRATIVE, THAT AN UNCHARITABLE PUNCTILIOUSNESS ABOUT RELIGIOUS THINGS, IS APT TO HAVE, AS ITS ACCOMPANIMENT, IF NOT ITS ROOT, SOME HIDDEN SELFISHNESS AND SELF-CONSEQUENCE. It was not that they so loved God's appointments, or that they were so devoutly concerned to obey them; but anxiety for a bludgeon to break the head of Him whose pure teachings were undermining their falsehood and tyranny. It was not God, but greed; not righteousness, but honour, place, and dominion; not concern for Moses and the prophets, but for themselves and their own consequence. On the occasion before us, there was a marked concern about honours and place. This was the inspiration of their assumed sanctity, and all their superior orthodoxy was only a sham for pride and lust of power. And only too apt is this to be the case in every in-

tolerant and uncharitable ado about the mere "mint, anise, and cummin" of the faith. VI. BUT THE END OF THE WHOLE MATTER IS ALSO HERE SHOWN US. Such a spirit has no favour with God, and has nothing good to expect. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*) They watched Him. — *What may be learnt from watching Christ*:—If we watch Christ also, we see how exalted piety instructs the worldly-minded. 1. He condescends to accept in friendly spirit the invitation that appeared to be friendly. 2. He explains and defends the right use of the Sabbath. 3. He rebukes pride by inculcating humility. 4. He unfolds to those around Him the nature of true humility. 5. From humility as His subject, in the presence of the proud, He proceeds to speak of hospitality in the presence of the selfish. 6. Our Lord distinguishes between the hospitality of ostentation, and the hospitality of true benevolence. 7. He deduces His instruction from passing events or from surrounding objects. 8. Seated at the supper, He utters to His host and the guests the parable of the Great Supper. (*Van Doren.*) *Healing on the Sabbath*:—Is it lawful to do anything but heal on the Sabbath day? Certainly not; that is the purpose of the day; it is a day of healing. If, therefore, in the very complex arrangements of our modern life, we are trying to interfere with anything that is customary on the Sabbath day, we should ask whether we are interfering with that which has a healing effect, or whether we are interfering with that which has an injurious effect; because there are many things that in their outward form are "works" that nevertheless in their general effects are healing. (*T. T. Lynch.*) *The coming Sabbath*:—We have been thinking and speaking of a miracle done on the Sabbath. It is evident that our Saviour had a preference for the Sabbath as a time for working miracles. How, then, is it with respect to ourselves—we who, many of us, would be glad to have a miracle wrought on our behalf, and yet have no right whatever to expect one? It is just thus—we are waiting for the Sabbath. In other words, it was intended, no doubt, to be taught us by our Saviour's practice, that there is a special time of rest coming, when all the various troubles that hamper and injure us will be utterly removed—our burdens unbound; our fevers cooled for ever; our weakness changed to strength; all our heaviness lightened; our blind eyes made clear; our deaf ears unstopped; our feet filled with vigorous leaping blood; and all that is within us lighted up with joy, even as the house was lighted up, and music and dancing sounded in it, when the prodigal came home. There is a Sabbath coming; and as Christ wrought His cures upon the Sabbath, when He was upon earth, we are taught to look on to a day of cure that is coming—that Sabbath, namely, of rest, into which we hope to enter hereafter. It may be needful for our perfection, and the perfection of our friends, that we should still be burdened; but we are quite sure that, after the round of the six days, there will come the seventh; we are quite sure, when the time of trial has ended, the boon of health will be granted. (*Ibid.*) *The dropsy*.—*Dropsy a figure of avarice*:—Dropsy is a disease which in general attacks only those of an advanced age. In a similar manner, from indifference to God and celestial things, and attachment to earthly goods, arises avarice—a vice to which many fall victims, especially in advanced years. I. SIMILARITY BETWEEN DROPSY AND AVARICE. 1. In the thirst occasioned by both. 2. In the sufferings occasioned by both. (1) Want of rest and joy. (2) Pains throughout the whole body. 3. In the dangerous character of the respective diseases. (1) Avarice is difficult of cure. (2) Should the avaricious man be converted, there is the utmost danger of his relapsing into his former sins. (3) Avarice frequently causes premature death. (4) Avarice causes everlasting death. II. DEATH THE DELIVERER FROM BOTH DISEASES. 1. Death and the grave warn us to despise earthly goods. 2. The judgment warns the avaricious to tremble on account of their possessions. For they provoke God—(1) By their injustice and hard-heartedness, which are often the cause of sins crying to heaven. (2) By the false confidence which they place in their goods. 3. Eternity teaches us to covet unfailing goods. (*Venedien.*) *Grief aiding thought*:—Here, then, stands the man that had the dropsy. Does he object to a miracle on the Sabbath day? It is surprising how our own necessities give an internal light to our principles. Many a thing that has been wholly dark to a man, so that he has said, "I cannot understand it," becomes translucent to him as soon as God has lighted up a grief within him. Put a grief inside a thought, and it is astonishing how much clearer the thought is. This man had clear views of the Sabbath—very clear views. The dropsy had given him those views. (*T. T. Lynch.*)

Vers. 7-11. He put forth a parable to those which were bidden.—*Christ's great*

text-book :—"When He marked how they . . ." The book of daily life was Christ's great text-book. What every man did, gave Him a subject; every word He heard started a novel theme. We poor preachers of the nineteenth century often cannot find a text, and say to one another, "What have you been preaching about? I wish I could get hold of another subject or two." Poor professional underheads! and the great book of life—joy, sorrow, tragedy, comedy—is open night and day. Jesus Christ put forth a parable, not after He had been shutting Himself up for a fortnight, and reading the classic literature of immemorial time, but "when He marked how they . . ." Keep your eyes open if you would preach well—keep your eyes open upon the moving panorama immediately in front of you, omit nothing, see every line and every hue, and hold your ear open to catch every tone, loud and sweet, low and full of sighing, and all the meaning of the masonry of God. Jesus Christ was, in this sense of the term, pre-eminently an extemporaneous speaker, not an extemporaneous thinker. There is no occasion for all your elaborate preparation of words, if you have an elaborate preparation of yourself. Herein the preacher would do well, not so much to prepare his sermon as to prepare himself—his life, his manhood, his soul. As for the words, let him rule over them, call them like servants to do his behest, and order them to express his regal will. What sermons our Saviour would have if He stood here now! He would mark how that man came in and tried to occupy two seats all to himself—a cunning fellow, a man who has great skill in spreading his coat out and looking big, so as to deceive a whole staff of stewards. What a sermon He would have evoked on selfishness, on want of nobleness and dignity of temper! How the Lord would have shown him how to make himself half the size, so as to accommodate some poor weak person who had struggled miles to be here, and is obliged to stand. I have been enabled to count the number of pews from the front of the pulpit where the man is. I paused there. My Lord—keener, truer—would have founded a sermon on the ill-behaviour. He would have spoken about us all. He would have known who came here through mere curiosity, who was thinking about finery and amusement, who was shopkeeping even in the church, buying and selling to-morrow in advance; and upon every one of us, preacher and hearers, He would have founded a discourse. Do you wonder now at His graphic, vivid talk? Do you wonder now whence He got His accent? Can you marvel any longer to what He was indebted for His emphasis, His clearness, His directness of speech, His practical exhortation? He put forth a parable when He remarked how they did the marketing, dressed themselves, trained or mistreated their families, went to church for evil purposes, spoke hard words about one another, took the disennobling instead of the elevating view of their neighbours' work and conversation. The hearers gave that preacher His text, and what they gave He took, and sent back again in flame or in blessing. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*) Sit not down in the highest room.—*Lessons* :—1. That Christianity is intended to enter into our whole conduct, not only when we are engaged in religious exercises, but even in our social intercourse with our fellow-creatures. Nothing, you see, can be a greater mistake than to suppose that religion is to be confined to the church or to the closet. It is intended to regulate our thoughts and passions, and to dispose us always to cherish those dispositions which are amiable. 2. We infer from this passage that humility is a disposition essential to true Christianity, which ought to be exercised, not only on great occasions, but at all times; and that it does not consist merely in speeches, but includes actions done even in the most common intercourse of life. 3. Nothing can be more true than the declaration of our Saviour in the eleventh verse: "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." In uttering this maxim He addresses human feelings. He allows that all men aspire after distinction and honour, but requires that these should be sought after by humility. For he who is not humble, but cherishes pride and vanity, shall be subjected to mortification and disgrace. On the other hand, all are ready to raise the humble man, and to rejoice in his exaltation. Even if he should pass unnoticed by his fellow-creatures, the exercise of humility will constantly improve him, and will at length enable him, with the blessing of God, to attain the true dignity which belongs to superior excellence: "For the kingdom of heaven is his." (*J. Thomson, D.D.*) *Christ's table-talk* :—Some interesting volumes have been published under the title of "Table-Talk." That of Luther is well known, in which many striking sayings of the great reformer are preserved, which would otherwise have sunk into oblivion. To other works of a biographical character, the above designation might have been

appropriately given, especially Boswell's "Life of Johnson." We need not say that its chief charm, the one feature in which its interest and value pre-eminently consists, is not the incidents it contains, but the conversational observations which are recorded. The table-talk, however, of Luther and Johnson, instructive and important as it was, is not for a moment to be compared with that to which we are permitted to listen on the present occasion. We have in this chapter, as well as in many other parts of the gospel narratives, the table-talk of Christ. And while in His more public addresses, "never man spake like this man," the same can be said of Him with equal truth concerning all He uttered in those social gatherings to which, from various motives, He was occasionally invited. *The gospel inculcates good manners*:—There are no manners so refined and graceful as those taught in the gospel, because the gospel refers all to the heart. The habit of "pushing," as we expressively call it, whether in affairs of smaller or greater importance, seems expressly discountenanced by the spirit of the gospel, and something very different is taught. We who have to bring up our children to make their way in life, should be careful how far we stimulate in them the pushing instinct. Do not encourage them to be loud and clamorous in asking, and to make the interest of "Number one" the point of only or first importance, and to thrust others aside. Doubtless we have much counter-opinion to meet on points like these, but let us hold to it that the manners which are pervaded by the evangelical spirit and temper are the true manners, both for the gentleman and the man of the world. It is said, "If we do not look after ourselves, no one else will." Certainly, as our great poet says, "Self-love is not so vile a sin as self-neglecting." But this is not the point. It is a self-love indulged so far that it becomes indifferent to the rights of others; it is the restless desire to get out of our proper place, and seize that which belongs to another, which is condemned. The world is always glad of people who are bent upon doing their duty and who keep their place, and takes delight in putting down those who do not know their place, and would grasp at honours not their due. Christ's lesson is one that comes home to us. It is not in the first instance a lofty and spiritual lesson, but a hint for our behaviour in the world of every day. And it is observable that He appeals to two very powerful passions—the sense of shame and the love of honour. If, in effect He says, you will persist in snatching at honours or advantages to which you are not entitled, you are on your way to be ridiculed, perhaps to be disgraced. If, on the other hand, you take a low place, lower, possibly, than that to which you are entitled, the chances are all in your favour. You may be promoted, and your promotion will bring honour upon you. An Oriental proverb says, "Sit in your place, and no man can make you rise." In other words, at life's feast sit down where all will accord you room, where none will dispute your right to be—a place that is lowly, therefore not envied; and there you may sit in peace and comfort. No man can disturb you in a place secured to you by the good will and respect of your neighbours. How much better this than to be contending for a position which the spite of others will not permit you to enjoy, and from which, sooner or later, you are likely to be removed. To how lofty a religious application is this lesson carried in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican! (*E. Johnson, M.A.*) *Amongst the lowly*:—We are all the subjects of love and of truth. We should indeed be dishonoured by absence from the feast; but as present, we show our fitness for honour by placing ourselves at the disposal of our royal host. We take the lowest room, and in that bright presence not the remotest corner is dark. Admission even, without promotion, is happiness. But Love, with his truth-anointed eyes, will soon see at which of the lesser tables we are suited to preside; among which group of guests we may best receive and dispense joy; and in what place and office of the festival we shall find our strength most free for generous exertion. Possibly, Love may see that we shall find it the truest promotion to remain in the lowest room and keep the door, and make those happy who, not fitted as yet to occupy high places, were nevertheless thought worthy of admission. Some of the great must always remain amongst the lowly, lest these become neglected and desponding, and a lowly heart is needed for this service. Perhaps our Saviour was sitting in a humble place, that the humbler part of the company might see and hear Him; and had declined, though with acknowledgment, the courteous request of the Pharisee that He would "come up higher." (*T. T. Lynch.*) *Promotion not to be sought apart from ability*:—There is a weapon much used in the contests of life—the elbow. We elbow our way on in the world. And there is another weapon, less regarded, but powerful—the knee. We must stoop the back to succeed in husbandry; and we must bend the knee to subdue the

evil power that assails us from below, the enemy, whose strength is in his pride. And humility is not a temper to be put off on promotion; it is our safeguard in the sorrows of our early career, our ornament in elevation. At the first, like a shield—beautiful as well as protective; and at the last, like health—safety as well as beauty. If, then, you ask, Am I sure of promotion if I take the lowest place? Yes, sure, we reply, if you take it with a lowly heart. But many seek promotion, as if it were—in a spiritual, that is, in a real, sense—possible, apart from true ability. Will any one blame the sapling for desiring to become an oak? or even the little forget-me-not for wishing to be made the memorial of some good man's friendship? No; nor will we blame any man for asking a field for his strength, and an opportunity for his talent. But many seek promotion with little thought of service and capacity. As if one should come to us, complaining of his lot, and we should say, "I need a captain for one of my ships; will you take the post?" "Captain of a ship," he exclaims, "I never was at sea." "Oh," but we say, "there are two hundred men on board to do your bidding." "Ah," but he cries, "I could not even tell them what sails to unfurl." "But," we add, "the ship is going on a lucrative voyage; the captain will be well remunerated." "Ah," he says, "I could take the money." And, indeed, that is what he seeks. Men may not know how to earn a loaf, still less how to make and to bake one; but they know that they could eat it. They may know themselves unable to fulfil a high function, yet they do not deem a high chair unsuitable for them, because the cushion is soft! True promotion, however, is like that of the captain, who is the first man in the rule of a storm, and the last man in flight from a peril. No man should wish for degrees of wealth and praise unsuited to his inward attainments. He cannot indeed be rich to good ends, to his own welfare or his neighbour's, without being wise and good. He cannot honestly and safely receive the praise of men unless he deserves their love. Humility is then the necessary condition of all true and abiding promotion. All going forward that comes of a vain heart comes to a bad end. Vanity raised us; into "vanity" we sink. We have but stepped on, to be put back again. Now we begin with shame to take the lowest room. Humility does not imply, but is inconsistent with, baseness of spirit. It knows self as feeble, because it knows God as strong. It is the vision of God's glory that gives us the discovery of our own poverty; we feel, but not abjectly, our dependence upon Him. We are utterly yet hopefully dependent. It is He who shall appoint to us our places, we seeking first to do the duties next us in the best way; content with a low place because of a good work, wishing for a higher one because of a better. Through humility the lowest things are well done; and as we rise, we shall need the knowledge that experience of such work will bring us, for we shall need to direct, and still occasionally to perform, labours which once exclusively occupied us. The wise master-builder is acquainted with the humbler tools and meaner services his work needs, and so can both control and encourage all the workmen he employs. Humility may fail to secure earthly promotion, and yet the capable man will often rise through it to places of serviceable power and pleasant esteem. Results in this world do not at once and invariably illustrate spiritual laws, but they frequently do so. (*Ibid.*)

Take the lowest room:—Most persons agree to say that their earliest religious days were their happiest and best. May not this be traced, in part at least, to the fact that, at the beginning, we all take "a lower place" than we do afterwards? Was not it that then you were least in your own eyes—that your feelings were more child-like—that you had more abasing views of the wickedness of your own heart than now? Or, you say, "My prayers are not effectual. I do not get answers when I pray, either for myself or others; and, in consequence of this discouragement, prayer has become lately a different thing to me, a thing without life, a thing without reality"—then I remind you, Those that point their arrows high must draw their bows down low. You must "go lower." Remember that it was to one who felt herself "a dog" that our Lord said, "O woman, great is thy faith;" and then gave her everything she asked—"Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Be sure there is "a lower room" in prayer than you have yet found. You must discover it, and go down into it, or you cannot find real peace of mind. Now, let us go into this matter a little deliberately. You use the ordinances of the Church and the private means of grace. It is well. Do you look for peace because you do this? You say, "No; I look for peace because I trust in Christ." That is better. But there is "a lower room" than that; and therefore a better way than that. We get forgiveness—and peace, the fruit of forgiveness—not because we do anything, or believe anything, or because we are anything—but because God is God, and because

Christ is Christ. It is the out-flowing of the free sovereignty of God's eternal grace, which, by believing, we take—and we, where are we?—but for that grace, in hell! You are to feel the amazing distance which there is between you and a holy God. "God, be merciful." That is "the lowest room;" and the way home is nearer and quicker—"I tell you that man went down to his house justified." (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *True humility*:—"Sit down in the lowest room." But first, let me guard my meaning. To say, "I am not a child of God, He does not love me," this is not to "sit down in the lowest room." This lowers God's grace, but it does not lower you; rather, it puts you up. Neither is it to "go down, and sit in the lowest room" to reason upon any duty; it is above that—"Who am I that I should do such a work as this?" Do you not know that you are one thing, and the grace of God that is in you is another thing? Nor yet is it to "take the lowest room" to be ignorant of, or to deny the possession of talents which God has given you. Still less is it intended that these words should extend to heaven, and that we should be content with the "lowest place" in the "many mansions." I can never for a moment hold with those who say, "Let me get only within the gate of heaven, and I shall be satisfied." Avoiding, then, these misinterpretations, let us now consider what is the real meaning of the words. First, towards God. What is "the lowest room" towards God? Now I conceive it to be, to be content simply to take God at His word, without asking any questions, or raising any doubts, but to accept, at His hand, all that God graciously vouchsafes to give you, the pardon, and the peace; to be a receptacle of love, a vessel into which, of His free mercy, He has poured, and is pouring now, and will go on to pour for ever, the abundance of His grace. Next, it is to be just what God makes you, to rest where He places you, to do what He tells you, only because He is everything, and you are nothing, conscious of a weakness which can only stand by leaning, and an ignorance which needs constant teaching. But now, how to man? This is the point which I wish to view this morning as practically as I can. But unless the relationship is right with God, it is quite useless to expect it will be right with man. Then make the well-balanced sense of what you are, and what God is, the inner sense of weakness and strength which makes true humility, a subject of express, special prayer; that when you pass into company, you may be able to know, by a quick perception, what your own proper part is—to speak, or to be silent; to take a lead, or to go into the shade. But whichever it be, have prepared yourself to put self out of sight; do not make yourself the hero of what you say, specially when you speak of personal religion. Do not expect, or lay yourself out for notice, but seek others' preferment. Anything approaching to argument would be an occasion which would especially call for this self-discipline of "taking the lowest room." Be on your guard, then, that self does not go up. Have a strong jealousy for the right, and fight for it; but do not confound your victory and the vindication of truth. If there be anything particular to be said, or any work to be done, and you see another willing to do it, and who can do it better than you, stand by, and let that other speak or act. But if there be not such a one, it will be as true humility to go boldly forward, and do it yourself. Only copy your great Pattern, and retire out of sight the moment it is said or done. If there be one among those you meet who is less thought of than the rest, show to that one the more kindness and attention. Do not put yourself up into the chair of judgment upon any man; but rather see yourself as you are—everybody is inferior in something, far worse than that man in some things. If you wish to do good to any one, remember that the way is not to treat him as if you were above him, but to go down to his level, below his level, and to speak to him respectfully. Sympathy is power; but there is no sympathy where there is self. If, brethren, you have failed in any relation towards God or man, the reason is mostly that you have not yet gone "low" enough. If you have not peace—if you have few or no answers to prayer—here, probably, is the chief cause. Therefore just try the remedy, "Go and sit down in the lower room." If you are troubled with suggestions of infidelity, the main reason is this, intellect has gone up too high. You are sitting as judge upon the Bible, when you ought rather to be the culprit at its bar. Be more a little child, handling the immensities of the mind of the Eternal. "Go and sit down in the lower room." And if you have not succeeded in your mission of life, this is the root; if you will go and be less, you will do much more. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Friend, go up higher.—Friend, go up higher*:—We have been taught to regard this parable as a counsel of prudence, and of a somewhat worldly prudence, rather than as a counsel of perfection. Some of our best commentators so read it, while they

confess that, thus read, it enforces an artificial rather than a real humility, that it even makes an affected humility the cloak of a selfish ambition which is only too real and perilous. What this interpretation really comes to is this, that when our Lord was speaking to men who eagerly grasped at the best places, all He had to give them was some ironic advice on the best way of securing that paltry end, in the hope that, if they learned not to *snatch* at what they desired, they might by-and-by come to desire something higher and better. Is that like Him? Do you recognize His manner, His spirit, in it? Can you possibly be content with such an interpretation of His words? I. Even if we take the parable simply as a COUNSEL OF PRUDENCE, considering the lips from which it fell, there is surely much more in it. Why may we not take it as enjoining a genuine and unaffected humility; as teaching that the only distinction which deserves a thought is that which is freely bestowed on men of a lowly and kindly spirit? Why may we not take it as setting forth a truth which experience abundantly confirms, viz., that even the most worldly and selfish of men have a sincere respect for the unworldly; that the only men who they can bear to see preferred before themselves are those of a spirit so gentle and sweet and unselfish as not to grasp at any such preference or distinction? II. BUT MAY WE NOT TAKE IT AS A COUNSEL OF PERFECTION? In the Church, as well as in the world, we find men and women of a pushing, forward spirit, a selfish and conceited temperament, who covet earnestly the best seat rather than the best gift, and the first place rather than the prime virtues; who never doubt that, let others be where they will, *they* are entitled to sit down in the highest room. And, curiously enough, it is the comparatively ignorant who are most deeply convinced of their own wisdom; the narrow mind which is most sure that it is always in the right; those who have the least in which to trust, who trust in themselves; those who are most incompetent to rule, who are most ambitious of rule, most vexed and incensed if they are not suffered to rule. What they most need, then, is to hear a Voice, whose authority they cannot contest, which bids them take a lower place, both in the Church and in their own conceit, than that which on very slender evidence they have assumed to be their due. On the other hand, happily, we find many men and women in the Church, who are either naturally of a meek and quiet spirit, or who, by the grace of God, have so far tamed and subdued their natural self-will and self-conceit as to show, by word and deed, that they are familiar with their own weakness, and are on their guard against it. And when the Voice comes to them, "Friend, go up higher, take a more honourable post, not that you may be better seen or receive praise from men, but that you may serve them better, on a larger scale, or in a more public way," no one is more unaffectedly surprised than they are. Yet these are precisely the men whom we all delight to honour and to see honoured. Because they abase themselves, we rejoice in their exaltation. III. Does, however, even this wholesome and pertinent lesson on humility exhaust the spiritual meaning which we are told this parable must have? By no means, I think. WE MAY READ IT IN A SENSE IN WHICH EVEN THE UNWELCOME COMMAND, "GO DOWN LOWER," MAY BECOME WELCOME TO US, AND MAY REALLY MEAN, "COME UP HIGHER." How often does our Lord compare the kingdom of heaven—i.e., the ideal Church—to a feast to which all are invited, and all may come without money and without price! And when we listen to the call, come into His kingdom, and sit down at His table, how often does the first joy of our salvation fade into disappointment and dismay as we perceive that His salvation is in large measure a salvation from ourselves, that His call is a call to share in His own self-sacrificing love, His unthanked toil, or even His poverty, shame, and affliction! When we first apprehend what His call really means, does it not seem to us as if it were a command to come down, not only from all that we once took pleasure or pride in, but also from the very honours and enjoyments which we had looked for in His kingdom and service? Alas, how we misread His love! For what can any call to the cross be, but a call to the throne? (S. Cox, D.D.) *The outward place reacting upon the inward spirit*:—Does the Lord here inculcate a feigned humility? By no means: He simply enjoins that a man should mortify his individual pride and self-seeking—an act of self-discipline which is in itself always wholesome and beneficial. If the man deserved the lowest or a lower place, then all was right; he took that to which alone he was fairly entitled. If he took a place below what he was entitled to, then he left it to the master of the feast, the only fountain of honour, to redress matters. Anyhow he set an example of "minding not high things," but "in lowliness of mind esteeming

others better than himself." It is to be remembered that in one of any real worth, the outward act would react on the inward spirit. The pride of spirit is fostered by outward self-assertion, and mortified by outward self-abasement. (*M. F. Saddler.*) *Pride and humility before the Divine Prince*:—With respect to the spiritual meaning of the parable, we have a remarkable key to it in Prov. xxv. 6, 7. The Lord must have had this place in His eye; He must have meant Himself by the "prince," for it was He who, as the Wisdom of God, inspired this passage. All pride, all self-assertion, all seeking of great things takes place in the presence of a King, the supreme Fountain of Honour, the Lord of both worlds, the present and the future. It is very necessary for us to remember this, for the shame and confusion of face which in this parable is represented as the lot of mortified pride does not always follow it in this world. Self-assertion, self-assumption, forwardness, and boasting, do not always entail a disgraceful fall upon the man who displays them. The meek do not as yet "inherit the earth"; though, if we can trust the words of Christ, they assuredly will. David asks, how is it that ungodly men "speak so disdainfully, and make such proud boastings." Men who are ambitious and self-seeking at times attain to the height of their ambition, provided, of course, that they have other qualities, such as prudence, cleverness, and perseverance. But a day is coming when the words of Christ with which the parable concludes (ver. 11), will be verified in the case of every man. He Himself is the "King" before whom all pride displays itself, and before whom it will be abased. And there is the greater reason that He should do so, for when He had the highest place in the universe next to the Eternal Father, He abased Himself, and took the lowest place, even the place of the cross of death, in order that He might exalt those who have "followed the example of His humility." The Judge at that day will remember and humble every act of pride, just as He will remember and reward every act of humility. Does this seem too much? Not for One who numbers the hairs of our heads, and without whose permission no sparrow falls, and who has engaged to bring every idle word into judgment, and make manifest the secrets of all hearts. Should it not, then, be a matter of prayer that God may humble us here rather than hereafter? It may be very bitter to have our pride mortified now, but it will be a thousandfold more bitter to have it mortified before men and angels, above all in the presence of the Prince whom our eyes have seen. (*Ibid.*) *The inferior seat preferred*:—It is said that General Gordon used to sit in the gallery of the church among the poor until, his fame becoming known, he was asked to sit in the luxurious seats appointed for the grandees, but that he preferred to keep the seat in which he had so long sat unnoticed and unknown. **Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased.**—*On the vice of pride*:—I. THE VICE OF PRIDE IS FOOLISH FROM ITS VERY NATURE. We ought all to be deterred from pride by the fact that the proud endeavours to deceive both others and himself by pretended advantages; and also that, instead of gaining honour and favour, he usually renders himself contemptuous and odious. Yet it will help us to a more thorough conviction how utterly unfounded and foolish pride is if we meditate—1. On the nothingness of man. (1) In the natural order. (a) What were we, say one hundred years ago? Nothing! No one thought of us. No one needed us. God called us from nothingness to life because He is good. (b) What are we now? We are not able to prolong our life for one minute unless God preserves it; we are subject to frailty of body and soul. (c) What are we to be ere long? We are to pass like a shadow: to die. (2) In the order of grace. (a) What have we been? Born in sin; and sinners by our own actions. (b) What are we to-day? Perhaps hardened in sin, or lukewarm. At best, exceedingly weak. (c) What shall we be at last? Dreadful uncertainty! Either converted, persevering, happy for ever, or obdurate, relapsing, reprobate for ever. Can we still remain proud, instead of imploring in the dust the Divine mercy and grace? 2. On the greatness of God. II. THE VICE OF PRIDE IS FATAL IN ITS CONSEQUENCES. 1. In reference to God. (1) Apostasy; (2) viciousness; (3) obduracy. 2. In reference to human society. (1) Anarchy, caused by the undermining of the pillars of social welfare, fidelity, piety, &c. (2) Revolution: when haughty governments oppress the people, or when the insolent masses refuse to submit to order. (3) Ruin of families, caused by dissensions. 3. In reference to individuals. The proud man is deprived of—1. Inward peace, which is never enjoyed by a soul enslaved by her own passions, and at variance with God. 2. Outward peace, since it is continually clouded by real or imaginary opposition, affronts, humiliation, and contempt. 3. The enjoyment of

true happiness. Although the proud have their triumphs, yet they are insufficient to satisfy man's heart, which will always crave for something more. Haman. (*Repertorium Oratoris Sacri.*) *Of humility*.—I. I AM TO CONSIDER WHAT TRUE HUMILITY IS, AND WHEREIN IT CONSISTS. 1. With regard to superiors in general, true humility consists in paying them cheerfully and readily all due honour and respect in those particular regards wherein they are our superiors, notwithstanding any other accidental disadvantages on their side, or advantages on ours. 2. Towards our equals, true humility consists in civil and affable, in courteous and modest behaviour; not in formal pretences of thinking very meanly and contemptibly of ourselves (for such professions are often very consistent with great pride), but in patiently permitting our equals (when it shall so happen) to be preferred before us, not thinking ourselves injured when others but of equal merit chance to be more esteemed, but, on the contrary, rather suspecting that we judge too favourably of ourselves, and therefore modestly desiring that those who are reputed upon the level with us may have shown unto them rather a greater respect. 3. With regard to our inferiors, humility consists in assuming to ourselves no more than the difference of men's circumstances, and the performance of their respective duties, for preserving the regularity and good order of the world, necessarily requires. (1) There is a spiritual pride in presuming to sin, upon the sense of the virtues we are in other respects endued with. This was the case of Uzziah, king of Judah. (2) There is a spiritual pride of vainglory in affecting a public appearance of such actions as in themselves are good and commendable. This was the great fault of the Pharisees (Mark xii. 38). (3) There is a spiritual pride of men confidently justifying themselves, and being wholly insensible of their own failings, while they are very censorious in judging and despising others. (4) There is still a further degree of spiritual pride in pretending to merit at the hands of God. (5) There is yet a higher degree of this spiritual pride in pretending to works of supererogation. Lastly. There is a spiritual pride in seeking after and being fond of mysterious and secret things, to the neglect of our plain and manifest duty. It remains that I proceed at this time to propose some arguments to persuade men to the practice of it. And first, the Scripture frequently lays before us the natural ill consequences of pride, and the advantages arising from true humility, even in the natural course and order of things. Pride makes men foolish and void of caution (Prov. xi. 2). It makes men negligent and improvident of the future; and this often throws them into sudden calamities (Prov. i. 32). It makes men rash and peevish, obstinate and insolent; and this seldom fails to bring down ruin upon them (Prov. xvi. 18). It involves men perpetually in strifes and contentions; and these always multiply sin, and are inconsistent with true happiness (Prov. xvii. 19). It makes men impatient of good advice and instruction, and that renders them incorrigible in their vices (Prov. xxvi. 12, 16; xxviii. 26). Secondly. The next argument the Scripture makes use of, to persuade men to the practice of humility, is this—that pride, as 'tis usually of natural ill consequence, so 'tis moreover particularly hateful to God, who represents Himself as taking delight to bring down the lofty and to exalt the humble. 'Tis the observation of Eliphaz in the book of Job, chap. xxii. 29 and chap. xxxiii. 14–17). An instance of which is the description of the haughtiness and the fall of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. iv. 30), and the instance of Pharaoh (Exod. v. 2), and that of Herod (Acts xii. 21). Another example is that of Haman, in the Book of Esther. Thirdly. The third and last motive the Scripture lays before us, to recommend the practice of humility, is the example of God Himself and of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In a figurative manner of speaking, the Scripture does sometimes ascribe humility to God, and recommends His condescension as a pattern for us to imitate. "The Lord, who dwelleth on high . . . humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth" (Psa. cxiii. 6). "Though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly" (Psa. cxxxviii. 6). And the same manner of speaking is used by God Himself (Isa. lvii. 15). These are the principal arguments the Scripture makes use of to persuade men to the practice of humility in general. There are, moreover, in particular, as many peculiar distinct motives to practise this duty as there are different circumstances and varieties of cases wherein it is to be exercised. Without practising it towards superiors, there can be no government; without exercising it towards equals, there can be no friendship and mutual charity. Then, with regard to inferiors; besides the general example of Christ's singular and unspeakable condescension towards us all, there are proper arguments to deter

us from pride upon account of every particular advantage we may seem to have over others, whether in respect of our civil stations in the world, or of our natural abilities, or of our religious improvements. If the advantages of our civil stations in the world tempt us to proud and haughty behaviour, we may do well to consider that argument of Job, chap. xxxi. 13: "If I did despise the cause of my manservant or of my maidservant when they contended with me, what then shall I do when God riseth up?" And chap. xxxiv. 19: "He accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor; for they are all the work of His hands." Which same argument is urged also by the wise man: "He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker" (Prov. xiv. 31). (*S. Clarke, D.D.*) *Humility not the way of the world*:—The world's rule is the exact opposite of this. The world says, "Every man for himself." The way of the world is to struggle and strive for the highest place; to be a pushing man, and a rising man, and a man who will stand stiffly by his rights, and give his enemy as good as he brings, and beat his neighbour out of the market, and show off himself to the best advantage, and try to make the most of whatever wit or money he has to look well in world, that people may look up to him and flatter him and obey him; and so the world has no objection to people's pretending to be better than they are. (*C. Kingsley.*) *God the true disposer of men*:—If God is really the King of the earth, there can be no use in any one setting up himself. If God is really the King of the earth, those who set up themselves must be certain to be brought down from their high thoughts and high assumptions sooner or later. For if God is really the King of the earth, He must be the one to set people up, and not they themselves. There is no blinding God, no hiding from God, no cheating God, just as there is no flattering God. He knows what each and every one of us is fit for. He knows what each and every one of us is worth; and what is more, He knows what we ought to know, that each and every one of us is worth nothing without Him. Therefore there is no use pretending to be better than we are. (*Ibid.*) *Pride cast down*:—Charles V. was so sure of victory when he invaded France, that he ordered his historians to prepare plenty of paper to record his exploits. But he lost his army by famine and disease, and returned crestfallen. *Humility exalted*:—The day Sir Eardley Wilmot kissed his Majesty's hands on being appointed Chief Justice, one of his sons, a youth of seventeen, attended him to his bedside. "Now," said he, "my son, I will tell you a secret worth your knowing and remembering. The elevation I have met with in life, particularly this last instance of it, has not been owing to any superior merit or abilities, but to my humility, to my not having set up myself above others, and to an uniform endeavour to pass through life void of offence towards God and man." *Humility a safeguard*:—A French general, riding on horseback at the head of his troops, heard a soldier complain, "It is very easy for the general to command us forward while he rides and we walk." Then the general dismounted, and compelled the grumbler to get on the horse. Coming through a ravine a bullet from a sharp-shooter struck the rider, and he fell dead. Then the general said, "How much safer it is to walk than to ride!" *Lowliness allied to loveliness*:—A humble saint looks most like a citizen of heaven. He is the most lovely professor who is the most lowly. As incense smells the sweetest when it is beaten the smallest, so saints look fairest when they lie lowest. (*T. Secker.*) *Humility allied to modesty*:—The humble soul is like the violet, which grows low, hangs the head downwards, and hides itself with its own leaves; and were it not that the fragrant smell of his many graces discovered him to the world, he would choose to live and die in secrecy. (*Sunday Teachers' Treasury.*) *Humility the essence of Christianity*:—St. Augustine being asked "What is the first article in the Christian religion?" replied, "Humility." "And what the second?" "Humility." "And what the third?" "Humility."

Vers. 12-14. Call the poor.—*The Church's duty to the poor*:—A recent advertisement on our city walls struck me as singularly suggestive; it contained the words, "God and the poor." Such a conjunction of words is most remarkable: the highest and the lowest, He who owns all things, and they who own nothing: it is a conjunction of extremes, and though it looked very extraordinary on a placard, yet if you examine the Old and New Testaments the idea will be discovered almost more frequently than any other. I. THE RELATION OF GOD TO THE POOR. There is a strange mingling of terror and tenderness in God's language in relation to the poor; terror towards their oppressors, tenderness towards themselves. Take the

former (Prov. xvii. 5; Isa. x. 2; Jer. xxii. 13; Amos v. 11'; &c.). Such are some of the sentences of fire in which God speaks of the oppressor of the poor. We now turn from terror to tenderness. We shall hear how God speaks of the poor themselves. The lips that spoke in fire now quiver with messages set to music (Isa. lviii. 6, 7). There is an extract which I must give from God's ancient legislation, and as I read you will be able to say whether ever Act of Parliament was so beautiful (Deut. xxiv. 19-21). And why this beneficial arrangement? A memorial act; to keep the doers in grateful remembrance of God's mighty interposition on their behalf. When men draw their gratitude from their memory, their hand will be opened in perpetual benefaction. II. THE RELATION OF THE POOR TO THE CHURCH.

"The poor ye have always with you." For what purpose? As a perpetual appeal to our deepest sympathy; as an abiding memorial of our Saviour's own condition while upon earth; as an excitement to our most practical gratitude. The poor are given into the charge of the Church, with the most loving commendation of Christ their companion and Saviour. 1. The poor require physical blessing. Christ helped man's bodily nature. The Church devotes itself more to the spirit than to the flesh. This is right; yet we are in danger of forgetting that Christianity has a mission to the body as well as to the soul. The body is the entrance to the soul. And is there no reward? Will the Lord who remembers the poor forget the poor's benefactor? Truly not! (Psa. xli. 1). 2. The poor require physical blessing; but still more do they require spiritual blessing. The harvest is great, the labourers are few. Do you inquire as to recompense? It is infinite! "They cannot recompense thee, but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." And yet they can recompense thee! Every look of the gleaming eye is a recompense! Every tone of thankfulness is a repayment. God is not unrighteous to forget our work of faith. If we do good unto "one of the least of His brethren," Christ will receive the good as though offered to Himself. Terrible is the recompense of the wicked! "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard." Much is being said about Charity. They have carved her image in marble; they have enclosed her in gorgeously coloured glass; they have placed on her lofty brow the wreath of immortal amaranth; poetry has turned her name into rhythm, and music has chanted her praise. All this is well. All this is beautiful. It is all next to the best thing; but still the best thing is to incorporate charity in the daily life, to breathe it as our native air, and to express it in all the actions of our hand. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." You will then be one with God! "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?" Then do not condemn the poor. "He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity." (J. Parker, D.D.) *Christian beneficence* :—

I. THE DUTY OF A CHRISTIAN TO DO GOOD; to lay himself out to do good to every one within his reach. 1. This arises from the very nature of the Christian character. Gratitude to Christ leads him to copy the Saviour, "who went about doing good." 2. The duty of laying ourselves out to do good arises from our Christian calling. When the Holy Spirit of God makes a difference between sinners who are living in ungodliness and walking after the vanity of their minds, why does He make that difference? God calls forth His people to be witnesses for Him, in such a manner that those who are blind to His glory in creation, and who neglect His glory in revelation, cannot refuse to acknowledge it when it is evidenced and reflected from the people that He has called by His grace. When God's people go forth doing good, when they manifest self-denial, when they are willing to "spend and be spent," in order to contribute to the temporal necessities or to the spiritual welfare of their fellow-creatures, there is something in these actions which tells upon the heart that is closed to all other means of receiving the knowledge of God's glory and salvation. II. *The object of Christian beneficence*. When a Christian does good, or tries to abound in any good work, it must not be from (1) personal vanity, (2) a desire of human applause, (3) for worldly recompense. His sole inducement must be the love of Christ; his one object the glory of God; his whole desire to advance the temporal and spiritual good of mankind. III. THE CHRISTIAN'S ENCOURAGEMENT TO lay himself out to do good unto all men, without looking for anything again. "They cannot recompense thee; but," &c. (W. Cadman, M.A.) *Christian feasting*—Much of the impressiveness of our Lord as a preacher arose from the miracles He

performed in confirmation of the divinity of His mission, and the truth of His doctrine; much also from His adapting Himself to the state and conditions of His hearers; and much also from His deriving His instructions and encouragements from present objects and occurrences, for this always gives a freshness to our discourse, and a superiority to the artificialness of study. He sees a sower going forth to sow, and for the instruction of the people is led to deliver a parable on the good seed of the kingdom. I. THE OCCASION OF THE ADDRESS. 'Then said He also to him that bade Him.' Concerning this invitation let us make four inquiries. 1. Who was it that bade Him? It was one of the chief Pharisees, a man of some substance and respectability, probably a ruler of the synagogue, or one of the Sanhedrim. We never read of any of the Sadducees inviting our Lord, nor do we ever read of the Herodians inviting Him. Though the Pharisees were the bitterest enemies of Christ, they had frequent interviews with Him. 2. For what was He bidden? Some suppose that this was a common meal, but the narrative requires us to view it as an entertainment, or some kind of festivity. 3. When was He bidden? We are told that it was on the Sabbath day. 4. Why was He bidden? He was invited by Martha from a principle of duty and benevolence, and she and Mary hoped to derive some spiritual advantage from Him. I wish I could think that this Pharisee invited our Lord under the influence of similar motives. But from whatever motive they were impelled He went not to eat and drink only. No, He went about His Father's business, this He constantly kept in view. He knew what His work required. He knew that the Good Shepherd must seek after the lost sheep until He find it. My brethren, you must here learn to distinguish between Him and yourselves. He had nothing inflammable in Him. The enemy came and found nothing in Him. But you have much remaining depravity, and are in danger from external circumstances; you therefore, must watch and pray lest you enter into temptation; you are safe when in the path of duty, there God has engaged to keep you. Let us learn from the Saviour's conduct to exercise good behaviour, that others may not have occasion to speak evil of us on account of our religion. Consider—II. WHAT OUR SAVIOUR FORBIDS. He said, "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee." This "supper or dinner" supposes something costly, for you observe that in the following verse it is called "a feast." Observe, it is not absolutely wrong to invite our friends, or our brethren, or our rich kinsmen, or our rich neighbours; but our Saviour looks at the motive here, "lest a recompense be made thee"; as much as to say, there is no friendship or charity in all this. And the apostle says, "Let all things be done with charity." You are to show more hospitality than vanity, and more charity than ostentation, and to be more concerned for those who want your relief. This brings us to consider—III. WHAT HE ENJOINS. "But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind." Here we see what a variety of evils and miseries are incident to the human race. Here are "the poor," without the necessaries of life; "the maimed," whose hands are unable to perform their office; "the halt," who are indebted to a crutch to enable them to walk at all; "the blind." Here we learn, also, the proper objects of your compassion, and the fittest subjects of your charity. It is not necessary that you should always have "the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind" at your table. You may fulfil the Saviour's design without this, and do as Nehemiah did, "send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared." IV. WHAT OUR SAVIOUR INSURES. "And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." 1. The blessedness: "Thou shalt be blessed." Blessed even in the act itself. Oh, the pleasures of benevolence! How blessed is it even in the review! for this blessedness can be continued and improved on reflection. How superior in the performance to sordid entertainments! "Thou shalt be blessed"—blessed by the receiver. Think of Job. He says, "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me, and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me. Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." What do we see yonder when we enter Joppa with Peter? "When he was come they brought him into an upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with

them." "And thou shalt be blessed"—blessed by the observers. Who does not observe? And who observes and does not bless on such occasions? Few, perhaps none of us, knew personally a Reynolds, a Thornton, or a Howard, of whom we have read; but in reading their history, when we come to their names we cannot help blessing them, and thus the words of the Scripture are fulfilled, "The memory of the just is blessed." "And thou shalt be blessed." Above all, blessed by God Himself, upon whom everything depends, "whose favour is life, and whose loving-kindness is better than life." He blesses personally and relatively. He grants you spiritual and temporal blessings. David says, "Let them curse, but bless Thou." 2. The certainty of this blessedness—"For they cannot recompense thee." This seems a strange reason, and would tend to check rather than encourage a worldly man. The foundation of this reason is this, that charity must be recompensed. If the poor cannot do this themselves, some one else must undertake it for them, and therefore God Himself must become answerable; and it is much better to have God to recompense us than to rely upon a poor dying creature. Paul therefore, says, to those who had made a collection to relieve him, and had sent it by the hands of Epaphroditus, "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." If, therefore, the thought ever occurs to your mind, "I know not those persons who have relieved me; I shall never be able to repay them," so much the better, for then God must, and if there be any truth in His word, if there be any love in His heart, He will. 3. The time of this bestowment—"For thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." Not that this will be done then exclusively, for, as we have already shown, there are advantages attending charity now. But it will be principally then, publicly then. The apostle says to the Corinthians, "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart; and then shall every man have praise of God." Then will it be done perfectly. It is not wrong to look for advantage in religion. But you should be upon your guard not to entertain a notion of meritoriousness in any of your doings. No, the reward is of grace, not of debt. (*W. Jay.*) *Christ's counsel to his host:*—Our Lord does not here enjoin neglecting and refraining from one's friends, kinsfolk, and neighbours, to entertain only the poor, maimed, halt, and blind. What He says is, when you make a dinner or supper—that is, as He immediately explains, *a feast*—let it be, not for those with whom you are accustomed to associate, but rather for the destitute and forlorn outside your circle. It is a question, you see, not at all of social fellowship, but of *expenditure*, and of the objects to which our great expenditures should be devoted. When you would lavish trouble and money, says Christ, let the lavishing be, not for your own personal gratification, not with the view of securing some enjoyment or obtaining some benefit for yourself, but for the blessing of others. The point on which the whole admonition turns, and to which it refers, is largeness of outlay. This is obvious. Our Lord is thinking and speaking, not of an ordinary meal such as might be spread any day, but of a feast, like the "great supper" of the parable that follows: and remember the occasion of His words, the circumstances under which they were uttered. He was dining on the Sabbath, in the house of one of the chief Pharisees, who had Him to eat Bread with him; and everything indicates that it was no common dinner at which He was present, but an entertainment on a large scale, got up probably with much pains, and regardless of cost. Christ noticed, we are told, how those who were bidden chose out the chief rooms; nay, such were the unseemly contests among the guests for precedence, and the rude struggling for the best places, which He witnessed, that when at last the tumult had subsided, and all were arranged, He could not forbear remarking on it in tones of rebuke. Evidently the meal was a grand affair, a banquet numerously attended and by many notable and distinguished persons. Contemplating, as He sat there, the profusion, the sumptuousness; picturing what it had cost—the amount of money, labour, and worry, and perhaps sacrifice, that had been expended on it—and penetrating that it was all mainly for selfish ends, with the idea and in the hope of some advantage through it; Christ turns His great mournful eyes upon the many with the words: "When you would make such another feast as this, my friend, at so much trouble and cost, instead of calling to it your rich friends, who are likely to recompense you for it, you should call to it the destitute and afflicted, who are unable to recompense you, and thus be blessed at the resurrection

of the just." The inner point and spirit of which form of words was this: "Ah! my friend, it is a mistake to make your great outlays of strength and treasure with a view to your own gratification and aggrandisement, for it is poor recompense at the best, after all. These great outlays should be reserved rather to meet the needs and ameliorate the unfortunate condition of others; for the blessing of that, though more ethereal and less palpable, is infinitely more worth. You should not burden yourself to win ought of present enjoyment or acquisition for yourself. If you burden yourself at all, it should be to supply some want or serve some interest of the necessitous around you." And the lesson remains for us. Let your extensive expenditures, your toils and worries, and hardships and sacrifices, be for those outside who require ministry, rather than for yourself. When it is a question of your own personal amusement or pleasure, of your own worldly comfort or gain, be content to spend but little; don't make a fuss, or lie awake anxiously, or go out of your way for *that*. If you do so at all, do it when the welfare of others is concerned, when there are others to be succoured or saved by it; reserve for such ends the incurring of heavy cost, the taking on of heavy burdens of thought and care. (*S. A. Tipple*).

Christian entertainments:—Jesus Christ did not intend that the rich should never have communion with one another, or hold intercourse with one another; that would be as absurd as it would be impracticable. The idea is that, having had your own fellowships and enjoyments, having eaten the fat and drunk the sweet, you are to send out a portion to him that hath none, and a blessing to him who sits in loneliness and sadness of heart. I had a wonderful dream some time ago—a singular dream. It was about the Mansion House and the Lord Mayor. I saw the great banquetting hall filled, and I looked and wondered at the people, for they had such a peculiar expression upon their countenances. They seemed to be closing their eyes, and so they were. Alas! they were all blind people, and all over fifty years of age. It was the great Lord Mayor of London himself who had invited all the blind people over that age in London to meet one another, and have one happy night, so far as he could make it, in the ancient banquetting hall. No loving cup was passed round, lest accidents should occur; but many a loving word was spoken, many a sigh full of meaning was heaved—not the sigh of misery, but the sigh of thankfulness. And then a strange silence fell upon all the guests, and I heard a voice from above saying in the English tongue quite distinctly, "They cannot recompense thee, but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." Then the banquetting hall seemed to be filled with spectators—glad witnesses—as if, at last there were upon the earth some fine touch of Christian feeling, some recognition of the mystery of charity and the boundlessness and condescension of Christian love. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

True Christian festivity:—I. It should be **UNSELFISH**. Not extended merely to those from whom we expect a similar return. II. It should be **MERCIFUL**. Extended to those who are generally neglected. III. **THIS FESTIVITY WILL BE REWARDED**. With the blessing of the poor now, and the commendation of the Judge hereafter. (*Anon.*)

Christian hospitality:—Our Lord really means that hospitality is first to be exercised towards those who need it, because of their narrow means, and to whom kindness of this sort is more pleasant, because they receive such little notice from the world. These are to be *first* recipients of our hospitality, and *after* them our friends, relatives, and neighbours, who may be supposed to be able to ask us again. This, of course, is directly contrary to the practice of the world. Now I do not think that we obey this injunction of the Lord by following its spirit (as the saying is) rather than its letter. It has been said that "the essence of the beatitude, as distinct from its form, remains for all who give freely, to those who can give them no recompense in return, who have nothing to offer but their thanks and prayers," and that "relief, given privately, thoughtfully, discriminately, may be better both for the giver, as less ostentatious, and for the receiver, as tending to the formation of a higher character than the open feast of the Eastern form of benevolence." But it is to be noticed that the Lord is not speaking of relief, *i.e.*, of almsgiving, but of hospitality. It is one thing to send relief in a basket to some poor person from your house, and quite another yourself to proffer to the same person food upon your own table of which you and he jointly partake. By relief or alms you almost of necessity constitute yourself his superior; by hospitality you assume that he is far more on the same level with yourself. Partaking of food in common has, by the absolutely universal consent of mankind, been esteemed a very different thing from the mere gift of food. If it be said that

such hospitality as the Lord here recommends is contrary to the usages of even Christian society amongst us, we answer, "Of course it is"; but, notwithstanding this, it is quite possible that the Christianity of our Christian society, of which we have so high an opinion, may be very imperfect indeed, and require reformation, if not regeneration, and that "the open feast of the Eastern form of benevolence" may be worthy of more imitation amongst ourselves. Look at the extravagant cost of some entertainments—viands set before the guests simply because they are costly and out of season—and consider that the difference between a fair and creditable entertainment and this extravagance would enable the giver to act ten times more frequently on the principle which the Lord inculcates, and for which he would be rewarded; consider this, and the folly of such waste, not to say its wickedness, is manifest. (*M. F. Sadler.*) *A model feast*:—I cannot think there is no connection with Divine things in the counsels Christ gave to His host about making a feast. I think He meant more than to alter a custom, or change social habits. What He advised went deeper, and had a profounder intention than that. He was reaching down to the foundation of things; showing how God deals with men, and what are the principles, or what is the measure and scope of His kingdom. He portrays a model feast. And if I mistake not, the portraiture is a pattern of things in the heavens. A place at the feast, I think He means to say, does not depend upon social grade, position, or attainments, but upon the needs of those who are called. Necessity, misery, helplessness, were to be the qualifications—poor, maimed, halt, blind. Friends and rich neighbours were not to be left out; they might come and share the joy and blessing—the joy of ministering and doing good to others; but the sore and the stricken were to be the guests; the invitations were to be sent specially to them. The ado, the preparation, the plentifulness, and the freeness of the feast, must be all for them, to bless them, and make them glad. That is God's feast. That is how God does. He prepares a feast for man—man the sinner, man the miserable, man the outcast, the hungry, the starved, the diseased, the dying; and He throws it open, and bids them all come, and sends to fetch them in. And when they gather, He lets His rich friends, the angels, rejoice with Him; for "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." (*W. Hubbard.*) *The poor invited to a feast*:—When I was quite a little boy, there lived in my father's house a man whom, as I look back, I, in common with most who knew him, cannot help regarding as, perhaps, the holiest man we were acquainted with. He lived a life of singular devotion and self-denial, and seemed to walk constantly in the presence of God. Some little time ago, when in Liverpool, I accidentally came across the person in whose house he had lodged in the days when he had first devoted himself to God, when he was quite a young man, before his connection with my own beloved father was as close as it afterwards became. This good man, who kept the house in which this gentleman lodged, told me a few anecdotes about him, and, amongst others, I remember the following: "Ah, Mr. Aitken!" said the man, "I shall never forget Mr. C——'s Christmas dinner." I said, "I wish you would tell me about it;" and he replied, "I will." "Christmas Day came near, and Mr. C—— called up my wife, and said to her, 'Now, I want you to make the very best dinner you possibly can; I am going to give a dinner-party.' 'Well, Mr. C——,' she said, 'you have been a long time in my house, and I never heard you talk of giving a dinner-party yet; but I will see to it that it is a right good dinner, and there shall be no mistake about it.' 'Do your best,' he said; 'I am going to invite my friends, and I want everything to be done properly.' My wife set to work and got a very good dinner indeed. Christmas Day came. Towards evening we were expecting the gentlemen to turn up who had been invited by our lodger; we did not know who they were, but we made sure they would be people worthy of the occasion. After a time, there came a knock at the door. I opened the door, and there stood before me a man clothed in rags. He had evidently washed his face, and got himself up a little for the occasion; at the same time he was a beggar, pure and simple. He said, 'Does Mr. C—— live here?' 'Yes,' I replied; 'he lodges here, but you cannot see him; he is just going to sit down to dinner.' 'But,' said the man, 'I was invited to come here to dinner this evening.' You may imagine my horror and astonishment; I could scarcely contain myself. 'What!' I said; 'you invited to come here this evening, a man like you?' I had scarcely got the words out of my mouth before I saw another poor, miserable specimen of humanity crawling round the corner; he was another of Mr. C——'s guests. By-and-by, there was a round dozen of them, or something like a score; and in they came, the most haggard,

miserable, woe-begone objects you could possibly conceive. They went into my wife's nice, smart-looking dining-room, with that grand white cloth, and all the good things which had been so carefully prepared. It almost took one's breath away to see them. But when we saw the good man himself, setting to work, like the Master of old (who girded Himself to serve His disciples)—setting to work to make these men happy, and help them to spend a pleasant evening, without stiffness or formality, we thought, 'After all, he is right. This is the best sort of dinner-party;' and we did not grudge the labour we had bestowed." Now, I have told that little anecdote in order to illustrate the fact that our Lord's teaching on such subjects is eminently practical, and that when He gives a suggestion, you may be sure that it is a very sensible and sound one. (*W. H. Aitken, M.A.*)

Call the poor.—Pococke informs us, that an Arab prince will often dine before his door, and call to all that pass, even to beggars, in the name of God, and they come and sit down to table, and when they have done retire with the usual form of returning thanks. It is always customary among the Orientals to provide more meats and drinks than are necessary for the feast! and then, the poor who pass by, or whom the rumour of the feast brings to the neighbourhood, are called in to consume what remains. This they often do in an outer room, to which the dishes are removed from the apartment in which the invited guests have feasted; or otherwise, every invited guest, when he has done, withdraws from the table, and his place is taken by another person of inferior rank, and so on, till the poorest come and consume the whole. The former of these modes is, however, the most common. (*Biblical things not generally known.*)

Feeding the hungry.—It was the custom of St. Gregory, when he became pope, to entertain every evening at his own table twelve poor men, in remembrance of the number of our Lord's apostles. One night, as he sat at supper with his guests, he saw, to his surprise, not twelve but thirteen, seated at his table; and he called to his steward, and said to him, "Did not I command thee to invite twelve? and, behold! there are thirteen." And the steward told them over, and replied, "Holy father, there are surely twelve only." And Gregory held his peace; and, after the meal, he called forth the unbidden guest, and asked him, "Who art thou?" And he replied, "I am the poor man whom thou didst formerly relieve; but my name is 'The Wonderful,' and through Me thou shalt obtain whatever thou shalt ask of God." Then Gregory knew that he had entertained an angel; or, according to another version of the story, our Lord Himself.

Christ-like hospitality.—It is said of Lord Chief Justice Hale that he frequently invited his poor neighbours to dinner, and made them sit at table with himself. If any of them were sick, so that they could not come, he would send provisions to them from his own table. He did not confine his bounties to the poor of his own parish, but diffused supplies to the neighbouring parishes as occasion required. He always treated the old, the needy, and the sick with the tenderness and familiarity that became one who considered they were of the same nature with himself, and were reduced to no other necessities but such as he himself might be brought to. Common beggars he considered in another view. If any of these met him in his walks, or came to his door, he would ask such as were capable of working why they went about so idly. If they answered it was because they could not get employment, he would send them to some field to gather all the stones in it, and lay them in a heap, and then pay them liberally for their trouble. This being done, he used to send his carts, and caused the stones to be carried to such places of the highway as needed repair.

Ver. 15. Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.—*Unreal words*.—There are a great many ways of turning a conversation when it happens to be suggestive of disagreeable truth, or to convey advice which we should prefer not to take, or to reveal to us points in our character which we should wish to keep hidden, even from ourselves. But of all the various devices resorted to for this purpose the pious ejaculation is usually the most successful, as well as by far the easiest. If it fail to change the subject, it at least causes an awkward pause, after which there is a fair prospect of an altered tone in the general talk. I. GLANCE AT THE SCENE. The Saviour had been putting some pointed questions respecting personal religion to His host and fellow-guests. Feeling that things had gone far enough in their present direction, and yet that by no possibility could exception be taken to anything that had been said, the guest introduced to our notice in the text attempts to dismiss to heaven those heavenly things which are not easily acclimatised to earth; to project into the future those "very excellent things" which were

felt to look best at a distance; to refer the whole subject to another world, and to change the venue, as I believe lawyers would say, by a formal remark—indisputable but unpractical—"Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." II. Let us see HOW THIS SPEECH WAS MET. All unreal ejaculations are evasive, self-deceiving (like Balaam's), or procrastinating; or all three. The ejaculation of the text was most likely all three. It was certainly evasive. And the Saviour met it by pointing out that the blessedness which the speaker, and others like him, professed to desire, was precisely that from which they were most ready to excuse themselves the moment it was offered to them; that "the kingdom of God" was something present, and not something merely future; that they could enjoy what they professed to regard as its blessings now; but that there were many other things which for the time being they very decidedly preferred. III. NOW WHY DID HE WHO WOULD NOT "BREAK THE BRUISED REED OR QUENCH THE SMOKING FLAX" THUS DISCOURAGE THOSE WHO WERE SAYING WHAT WAS VERY GOOD? I should say, He did not discourage otherwise than by suggesting that they should weigh the import of their words and test their reality. "By thy words," said our Saviour, "thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." He did not mean, of course, that we shall be judged by these alone; but that they will be taken into account. And for a moment, drawing away our thoughts from our bad words, let us ask ourselves whether our good words may not prove, after all, the more condemning, and wait over ages and ages, as the verdict of the Most High, the echo of His words by Isaiah long ago, "This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." (*J. C. Coghlan, D.D.*)

Vers. 16-24. **A certain man made a great supper.**—*Parable of the great supper*.—I. THE ELABORATE PREPARATION. Indicating the treasures of Divine wisdom, forethought, power, love, expended upon the work of redemption. II. MEN'S PREFERENCE OF OTHER THINGS—not things sinful in themselves, but worldly pursuits, occupations, pleasures—to the rich provision of the Divine bounty, and their consequent slighting of the Divine invitation. III. LOVE SLIGHTED TURNS TO INDIGNATION. IV. GOD'S PURPOSES ARE NOT FRUSTRATED BY THE DISOBEDIENCE AND UNTHANKFULNESS OF MAN. The house is filled. If one guest refuses to come, another is brought in to occupy his place. Drop your crown, and another man will lift it and place it on his brow. (*Anon.*)

The gospel feast.—I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GOSPEL. 1. Its readiness. Nothing for man to do but come. The feast has been preparing from the foundation of the world. 2. The gospel's abundance. Grace enough in God's heart to include all the world. 3. The condescension of the gospel. No favouritism. Absolutely free. The vilest soul is good enough to be saved. 4. The gospel's urgency. Not force, but moral earnestness. 5. The gospel's triumph. Christ's blood is not shed for nought. II. THE RECEPTION OF THE GOSPEL. 1. The gospel finds no favourable reception from—(1) The gospel-hardened. Every invitation rejected does but set more firmly in opposition a will already opposed to Christ. The heart grows stubborn and indifferent. (2) The proud. (3) The pre-occupied. When Mark Antony began his famous speech with the words, "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears," he well knew that he might as well toss his words to the idle winds that swept over the dead body of his friend, as address an audience who paid him no attention. In the preaching of the gospel, the very fact that people are interested in it, talking about it, working for it, heralding it far and wide, is a guarantee of its effectiveness. We must make men think about their souls. So long as their oxen, or their stores, or their wills, or their ships are in their minds, Christ cannot get in. (4) The self-satisfied. Here is the trouble with many a man of amiability and worth. He has a pleasant home, friends he delights in, social ties, all possible comforts. He needs to see that this is not enough. He ought to hunger and thirst after righteousness, and at the gospel feast he might be filled. 2. The gospel is tolerably certain to find reception among—(1) The needy. (2) The neglected. (*A. P. Foster.*)

The gospel supper.—I. THAT GOD HAS MADE AMPLE PROVISION IN THE GOSPEL FOR ALL OUR SPIRITUAL EXIGENCIES. That provision is here set forth under the similitude of a great supper. That the gospel supper may be thus designated will appear if we think of—1. Its Author. It has been provided by God himself. 2. The expense at which it was procured. Almost incredible sums have been expended in the getting up of sumptuous entertainments. But what were they when compared with the expense incurred here? To provide this banquet, the Son of God became incarnate, lived a life of reproach, of poverty, of persecution, and died the accursed death of the

cross. 3. The greatness and variety of the blessings which are set before us. And what tongue of man or angel can describe them in their ineffable importance? They include all the treasures of grace here, and all the inconceivable treasures of glory hereafter.¹ II. THAT INVITATIONS OF THE MOST ENCOURAGING KIND ARE GIVEN US TO COME AND PARTAKE OF WHAT GOD HAS GRACIOUSLY PROVIDED. 1. The characters to whom they were addressed. First, to the Jews only. Then to all men. 2. The manner in which the invitations should be applied. Moral compulsion. 3. The motives by which they should be enforced. (1) That the provisions are all duly prepared. "Come; for all things are now ready." The Saviour has been made flesh; He has finished the work which was given Him to do; the sacrifice He offered has been accepted; the Spirit has been poured out from on high; the ministry of the gospel is instituted; the sacred canon is complete. (2) The amplitude of the preparations. "And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room." Although so many have been gathered in, the seats are not all occupied. III. THAT THE DIVINE PROVISIONS, OF WHICH WE ARE SO FREELY INVITED TO PARTAKE, ARE BY MANY SLIGHTED AND DESPISED. The excuses offered are—1. Various. 2. Frivolous. 3. Evasive. IV. THAT THOSE WHO DESPISE THE PROVISION OF THE GOSPEL CANNOT DO SO WITHOUT INCURRING THE GREATEST GUILT, AND WITHOUT EXPOSING THEMSELVES TO THE MOST AWFUL DANGER. (*Expository Outlines.*) *The marriage feast.*—We know that, in every department of life, happiness, health, honour, and prosperity, involve two essential elements, one of which is a provision for these things in nature and society, and the other of which is an appropriation of that provision by those to whom it is offered. And this last is as indispensable as the first. That which makes the offer and the provision of any validity or usefulness is the circumstance that there is some one to accept it. Let us look, for one moment, at this. God has made great provision of the elements of nature. Light—oh, how abundant! how beautiful! how sweet!—and all that will accept this boon of God shall have the benefit of it. The blind cannot. The wilfully blind cannot; for although there is light enough for thrice ten thousand times as great a population as that which inhabits the globe, if a man endungeons himself purposely, and shuts out the light from the room where he dwells, the abundance of the provision and the offer make no difference with him. He loses it and all its blessings. There is heat enough, and there are sounds enough, for the comfort and for the solace of the human soul; and yet, unless men accept these things, the mere fact that they have been offered to all, and that they are abundant, will do them no good. We know that in respect to those great qualities of nature the abundance of provision does not enforce acceptance. The great prime necessities of life, such as food, raiment, shelter—God has put the elements of these things within our control, and there is provision for all the wants of men, and for the growing needs of society: but if men refuse to work; if they refuse to practice frugality; if they will not put forth skill, the God of nature and the God of grace lets them pine, and lets them starve, as much as if there had been no provision. The earth does not reveal its secrets except to those that search for them; and the rains, and the sun, and the soil, do nothing, except to the seed that is hid in the crevices of the ground. The summer is barren to the sluggard. There is provision enough for all the wants of men, if they accept them on the conditions on which they are proffered; but if they do not accept them on these conditions the abundance does not insure to their benefit. When men violate the laws of their being, however innocently or ignorantly, they are made to suffer the penalties of those violated laws, and sickness and pain come in. And when a man is sick, though all remedies are provided, and though the most skilful physicians are called to their bedside, these will do no good if he will not accept the remedies that skill has found out, and that kindness is proffering. These facts are familiar to us. They go to illustrate and confirm the general statement that something more is required than a provision and a proffer. Thus far I have spoken of the physical laws of nature. It may be said that this is not in the moral realm, and that the analogy is not a fair one. Therefore, I proceed to show that in the moral realm the constitution of things is even more marked than in the physical realm. We know that a man's happiness or misery in this life depends upon the manner in which he exercises his faculties. That is to say, it is not a matter of indifference which way a man uses the powers of his mind, any more than which way a man turns the key when he winds his watch. Turning it one way ruins it, and turning it the other way expedites it. It makes a difference which side of the blade of a knife you use if you would cut wood. It makes a difference which way you work

a machine. One way of working it agrees with its nature, and the other way of working it disagrees with its nature. And so it is with a man's mind. It was meant to act in conformity with certain definite principles and results. If it conforms to these there is happiness, and if it does not there is misery. We also see in human society—which is as divinely-ordained as is human life itself; for a man's organs are no more fitted to be put together to make the individual man than individual men are fitted to co-operate together in society—we see in human society this same law evolved with terrible certainty at large. If men seek happiness, honour, love, there is abundant provision for them in society. All things are ready. They are accessible by right conduct. If men neglect the provision for happiness, and honour, and love, they will miss these ends, and that, too, although God is good and kind, although there is a providence that is supervising human society—a Providence that will not suffer a sparrow to fall to the ground unnoticed—a Providence that knows that we are in need of raiment, and shelter, and food, and nourishing care. If men do not accept voluntarily the provision of these things which is made in society, there is no providence that will rescue them from the wretchedness that will ensue from disobedience. The administration of God is full of goodness; but goodness in the Divine administration is employed according to law. All philanthropy, all humanity, and all sympathy and succour, carried down to grog-shops and to the Five Points, will not assuage one pang, and will not rescue one wretch, unless he is willing to return and co-operate, and bring himself under the influence of remedial law. Now, at this point we reach again the Word of God, and are prepared to receive its declarations, with all corroborations and presumptive analogies in its favour. 'The feast of the gospel is spread. The King, in His great bounty, sends His servants forth to say to all, "Come to the marriage supper." To lay aside the figure, God makes the proffer of forgiveness, of amnesty for the past, and of unbounded joy and happiness for the future. If you accept the provision, which is ample enough for every human being on the globe, you are blessed; but if you neglect it, or refuse it, that provision, if multiplied a myriad times, would be of no more avail to you than light to the blind, sound to the deaf, or food to the dead. It is a provision that is invalid if you fail to accept it. If you take it you live; if you reject it you die.' Although, then, the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God is one of the most blessed doctrines of the Bible, and one of the most animating to our hope, we must not pervert it, and suppose that, because God administers as a universal Father, therefore, all sorts of men, under all sorts of circumstances, are perfectly safe. I would not take away one single whit of the beauty, or attractiveness, or encouragement of the thought that God loves, and that everything that love can do will be done to make men happy here, safe in death, and glorious hereafter; but I warn you not to suppose that everything can be done merely because God loves. There are limitations even in an infinite God. (H. W. Beecher.) *The great supper*.—I. "A certain man made a great supper"—the movement originated with himself, in his own mind—HIS OWN FREE BOUNTY—his own generosity—his unsolicited willingness to make others partakers of his rich enjoyments. The man here supposed represents Almighty God Himself; and the action here ascribed to Him represents the preparation of Christianity—that rich and saving feast for a perishing world. It originated (if an eternal purpose can properly be said to have had a beginning) in His own mind, His own free love, His own unsolicited willingness to make fallen men partakers of His own happiness, "that they might be filled with the fatness of His house—that they might drink of the river of His pleasures" (Psa. xxxvi. 8). See, then, the nature of the preparation. It is the mode adopted by Divine wisdom to render it a right thing—a righteous thing—for a sovereign Lawgiver and upright Judge to deal with convicted rebels as a pardoning father and a sympathizing friend; it is, in the language of St. Paul, that "God may be just, while He justifies the ungodly" (Rom. iii. 19-26; v. 6-8). Behold, also, the extent of the preparation. It knows no earthly bounds, it extends to heaven; its value is not to be measured by earth, but is to be found in the harmonized perfections of God. II. Now look at the INVITATION TO IT. He said to his servant, at the supper time, Go and "say to them who were bidden, Come; for all things are ready." This represents the commission to preach the gospel. St. Paul was determined to know nothing else, and preach nothing else. He accounted it the most distinguishing and the most exalted of the favours bestowed upon him, that he should declare among the Gentiles the "unsearchable riches of Christ"—in other words, the preparation of the Great Supper. And he exhorted—i.e., he pressed the invitation upon men—earnestly, that they might

"not receive the grace of God in vain"; and urgently, because the time was short: "Now," he said, "is the appointed time, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 1, 2). III. And now having so spoken of the preparation and the invitation, our next theme is a painful one—THE RECEPTION THAT THIS INVITATION MET WITH. The force of this portion of the parable lies in this—that the objects which, in their effects, became destructive, were in themselves lawful and right. The contrast is not between sin and duty, but between duty and duty—between duty number two and duty that ought always to be number one. The contrast is not between the house of gambling and the house of God—it is not between intemperance and uncleanness on the one side, and prayer and praise on the other; no, it is not that phase of human guilt that is exhibited; the contrast is rather between the counting-house and the church, the shop and the house of God, domestic enjoyments and secret prayer. The contrast is between the attractions which the lawful occupations of this world possess for the natural heart of man, and the secret repugnance felt by that heart to the enjoyments of God. IV. But the parable does not end there; the servants came in and repeated this answer, and the master was not satisfied; then he told the servants "to go out into the streets and lanes of the city, and to bring in the poor and the maimed, and the halt and the blind." There is an intimation in this part of the parable that a power would accompany the invitation such as would not be refused—such as would secure a company—such as would not leave the seats around the Master's table unoccupied, but, on the contrary, that his house should be filled. Now, think of this secret power. Here, again, we refer to the persons and resources of the Godhead. Jesus said, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever." He shall present the preparation for the supper, and He shall urge the invitation, so as to supersede all pre-engagements, and put an end to all excuses. He has power to secure a gracious result without the slightest interference with the free operation of the moral machine that He has made. Nothing else can secure this; there is to be no force, and yet the result is to be secured; no action constrained, and yet the character totally altered. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power" (Psalm cx.). The will rules the man; and who rules the will? There is revelation of a secret power, which, touching the will, secures all that follows in the man's life with perfect freedom. Look at a large and complicated machine under the control of a little fly-wheel; that locked, the machine is stationary; that liberated, the machine goes on. See, the machine is stationary, and ignorant violence is made use of to make it go on, but in vain—blows are aimed at it to make it go on, in the wrong place, all in vain—it may be broken, but it cannot by violence be made to work—sledge-hammers are raised on it in vain; but see, a little child, properly instructed, with a little finger frees the fly-wheel, and the whole machine goes forward in its work; every arm, and every lever, and every wheel performs its appointed action duly and freely. It was that touch that did it—that touch is promised, of God, to us—in hope of it we preach, without it we preach in vain; all is sounding brass and tinkling cymbal without this. (*H. McNeile, D.D.*) *A great feast*:—I. With regard to THE NATURE OF THE FEAST. "A certain man made a great supper and bade many." What, then, is this feast which our Lord has provided, and of which He has sent His servants to invite men to come and partake? First, as bread satisfies hunger, and is necessary to sustain life, so Jesus Christ is that true bread which cometh down from heaven—the bread of the soul—the bread that alone can satisfy and sustain the spiritual and eternal life of man. His flesh is given as meat, and His blood as drink; and this is the feast. I cannot enlarge upon the particulars of this feast, but observe that a feast is not merely bread, it is fulness of bread; it is a rich provision—there is variety of provision. This the gospel gloriously attests; here is everything that man can want; here is not only pardon for the guilty, reconciliation for him that is at enmity with God, but all the rich provision of grace, all the fulness and comfort of the Spirit of God; all the plenitude of His promises is here; there is nothing that the soul can eat or desire, in any state or condition in which it is seen, but is to be found here; in the gospel feast there is all that is wholesome, suited to its tastes, its appetites, its desires, its lofty capacities, and capable of fully and eternally satisfying them. Here, then, the children of God see their privilege. The Saviour is an omniscient Saviour and an omnipresent Saviour—a Saviour present with the Church, knowing every case, every heart, and every want; and He has in Himself fulness to satisfy every longing desire or wish. II. We are to consider THE CONDITION OF THOSE WHO WERE FIRST BIDDEN TO THIS FEAST, AND FOR WHOM IT WAS SPECIALLY PREPARED. I say

specially provided; for you will recollect that these persons were the children of the promise—the heirs of the covenant. “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” So St. Paul says, “the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first.” The three principal grounds on which men slight the gospel are here referred to—they are common, not to the Jews only, but common to the Gentiles. The first ground is wealth. The first said, “I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it.” The disposition of mind by which a man is induced to seek the increase of wealth is opposed to the gospel. This disposition is so fatal to many that it operates, as in the case of the parable, utterly to exclude them from tasting the supper. It does not so fill and choke up the appetite—it does not so corrode the taste as to prevent their enjoying, as to prevent their fully partaking of this blessing, but it cuts them off altogether—they cannot taste of this supper. Is it not so with your hearts, while you are coveting the world? Can you enjoy Christ? You cannot! 2. The second disposition of mind which excludes men from tasting the supper of the gospel grace, is that which involves them in the vortex of this world’s cares. This is figured in the parable by the yoke of oxen—“I have bought five yoke of oxen, and must needs go and prove them.” 3. Another said, “I have married a wife”; and therefore he was in a greater strait than the other two—he said positively, “I cannot come!” This parable is against those moral people—those honest people—those people whose lives are so irreproachable and blameless in everything except the matter of their salvation. It applies to those that are comparatively enlightened, to those that would be shocked at gross immorality, to those who would not exhibit in their lives, on any account, those vices which they condemn in others; but sin sits enthroned in their heart, in the shape of a secret and subtle covetousness, in a character that absorbs them in their pleasures, and steals and weans their affections from God. And this is, perhaps, the most awful case of all. Go and preach the gospel to those who have no ground of justification; and if you can get them to listen to the gospel, they will fall down at your feet and confess their sin. Examine, trace in your hearts the working of this worldliness, consider the objections that hold you back from Christ, and you will find that they resolve themselves into the excuses of those who were first bidden to this feast. It is the land and the oxen, it is the pleasure of this world, all which perish in their using, and will leave you hungry and naked, and poor and wretched at the bar of God! I come now to speak of—III. THE CHARACTER OF THOSE WHO REALLY DID ENTER IN AND PARTAKE OF THIS SUPPER. You will observe that those who were thus bidden the second time were described by this character, which marked the destitution of man: “Bring in hither the poor and the maimed, and the halt and the blind”; for this was the spiritual condition of the Gentile world. It marks their destitution—they are poor, they are without God and without hope in the world. In the heathen countries they were without Christian ordinances, without Christian Sabbaths, without Christian instruction. The verse also relates to those who might justly make excuse upon any ground than that of the gospel invitation; who might by self-abasement and humility of spirit say, “How can it be? How can it be that the Prince, the King, and Lord of this supper should send for me? You must be deceiving, you must be making game of me—you must intend some derision; the invitation cannot be for me.” “Go,” says the King, “and compel them to come in; go and tell them how large the offer is.” (*J. Sutcliffe.*) *The feast only for those who can appreciate it:—*Now why is it difficult to us to represent to ourselves this unwillingness? Because we always think of the great supper simply as so much unmeasured happiness, so much unmixed delight. It will be happiness, it will be delight, but only to those who can appreciate it; not to the base, not to the selfish, not to the false, not to the weak, not to the impure. It will be the highest happiness of which human nature is capable; but it can only be tasted by those who are of kindred nature to Him who gives it. Those who would not come when they were invited would not have found it a happiness if they had come. Now this, the very principle of the parable, is just as applicable to our daily life as it is to any such critical moment as the parable supposes. We are invited to a spiritual feast; to a feast of that happiness which is got from perfect self-mastery, from peace with our consciences, from having no cloud between us and those whom we love, from having no cloud between us and God. We know perfectly well that this is a very real happiness. We have had foretastes of it now and then, quite enough to show what it is like. But this duty, which thus seems ever to pursue us and give us no rest, it is so exacting, it is so dull, it is so unrewarded,

what wonder that we turn away? No, indeed it is not. There are those who find it so; those, namely, who refuse the invitation, and go to this and to that; and then—not in repentance, but in sullen acquiescence; not because their hearts are touched, but because they fear consequences, and because they are disgusted with the pleasure which they have preferred to duty—come back, like Balaam, to obey in deed but not in spirit. Such men learn what is meant by the words “None of those men who were bidden shall taste of My supper.” To them the supper is no supper at all. To them that obey in an unloving, discontented, sulky mood there is indeed no happiness in obedience. They obey, and find no peace in obedience. They deny themselves for the sake of others, and instead of loving those whom they thus benefit all the more, they love them all the less. They conquer the outburst of temper, and substitute an inward brooding of ill-will. They resist temptation, and feel a kind of resentment against Providence for having put this hard task upon them. They come, but they do not taste the supper, for they refused it. But it is a real pleasure, a pleasure above all other pleasures, to those who come heartily and gladly, who make the needful sacrifice with a ready spirit and with a resolute cheerfulness, forcing away from their minds all gloomy suggestions and all discontented feelings, recognizing in the trifle which calls them as sure a summons from the Great King as if it had been the royal messenger Death; seeing in each invitation to Christian effort a call, not to pain, but to joy; not to a task, but to a supper; not to a loss, but to a service in the King’s court. (*Bishop Temple.*) *The gospel feast:—*

I. A TYPE OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. 1. Of the nature of the gospel. A supper. It is God’s provision to satisfy the soul’s hunger. 2. Of the abundance of God’s provision in the gospel. A great supper. (1) Every want of the soul can be satisfied by the gospel. (2) Satisfied for ever. 3. Of the freeness of the gospel. (1) In the grace which provided it. (2) In the generosity which invites to it.

II. A TYPE OF THE TREATMENT THE GOSPEL RECEIVES. 1. The term used to express this treatment is very noticeable. Excuse. Not positive refusal, yet not acceptance. 2. The excuses mentioned are noticeable. (1) Though often rendered, how untenable. Feast occurring probably in evening, would not have interfered with land speculator or enterprising farmer; and the young husband could have taken his bride with him. (2) Though differing in their phases, how similar in spirit. Setting personal gratification above the claims of God. **III. A TYPE OF THE EFFECT OF THIS TREATMENT ON THE DIVINE MIND.** 1. The Divine resentment is here stated. 2. Fresh orders are given. 3. New decree declared. Lessons: 1. The provision God has made for us in Christ—how satisfying and abundant. 2. Excuses for procrastination—how common—how dangerous. 3. When God says, “None of those who were bidden shall taste,” &c., seals the doom of such. (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*)

*On receiving the grace of the gospel:—*The eating of bread mentioned in previous verse imports the enjoyment of eternal goods, both for necessity and delight, in heaven. But our Lord here takes that man off, and us in him, from a general admiration of their happiness in heaven, to a particular application of the means conducing to that happiness, even the receiving the grace of the gospel. They that would eat bread, or enjoy fellowship with God in heaven, must first eat bread, or partake of the gospel-provision here on earth. **I. THE WAY TO ENJOY THE ETERNAL GOOD THINGS IN THE KINGDOM OF GLORY, IS TO CLOSE WITH THE SPIRITUAL GOOD THINGS IN THE KINGDOM OF GRACE.** 1. “Eating bread” implies most intimate and immediate union with God. 2. It denotes the abundant supply of all wants. 3. The full and familiar enjoyment of good company. 4. Complete satisfaction in the fruition of all contents and delights. **II. WHAT ARE THOSE SPIRITUAL GOOD THINGS WHICH WE ARE TO CLOSE WITH IN THE KINGDOM OF GRACE?** 1. Spiritual privileges provided for us in the grace of the gospel (Isa. lv. 1; Zech. xiii. 1). Reconciliation, adoption, remission, sanctification, vocation, salvation. This gospel provision is the plank after the shipwreck, or the ark in the midst of the deluge. No other way of escaping destruction or obtaining salvation. 2. Spiritual ordinances for the conveying of spiritual privileges, and ensuring them. Preaching. Sacraments. 3. Spiritual graces for the improvement of spiritual ordinances (Gal. v. 22). These are the clusters of grapes to make us in love with the Holy Land, notwithstanding oppositions. This fruit grows nowhere but in Christ’s garden. The Vine which bears it is Himself. 4. Spiritual duties for the expression of spiritual graces. Praying; hearing; exhorting one another, &c. **III. HOW ARE WE TO CLOSE WITH THESE SPIRITUAL GOOD THINGS?** 1. We are to receive them by faith, embracing the grace of the gospel (John i. 12). 2. We are to walk as we have received Christ (Col. ii. 6); leading a holy life by

virtue drawn from Him through our union with Him; giving the world a proof in our holy life of the virtue in Christ's death for rectifying our crooked nature. IV. WHY WE MUST CLOSE WITH SPIRITUAL GOOD THINGS, IF WE WOULD ENJOY ETERNAL. Because the one is part of the other. Saints in heaven and saints upon earth make up but one family. Grace is the beginning of glory; some compare it to the golden chain in Homer, the top of which was fastened to the chair of Jupiter. Grace will reach glory, and it must precede glory. Use 1. This informs us—(1) That it is good for man now to draw near to God (Psa. lxxiii. 28). It tends to his everlasting happiness. (2) See their vanity who draw back from God, or bid God depart from them when He comes near them in the means of grace vouchsafed to them (Psa. lxxiii. 27; Job xxi. 14). Sin divides between God and the soul. Use 2. Yet this doth not make, but many may partake of gospel mercies in the kingdom of grace, and yet never come to glory. Those who have slighted their privileges and advantages will receive the greater condemnation. Use 3. Would you come into the kingdom of glory? (1) Come into the kingdom of grace. (2) Live as under the laws of this kingdom of grace. (a) Perform allegiance to God, yielding yourself to Him. (b) Expect protection from God, and draw nigh to Him (James iv. 8). (c) Pray that the territories of the kingdom of grace may be enlarged more and more upon the face of the earth. (d) Prepare for the translation of the kingdom of grace into the kingdom of glory (1 Cor. xv. 24, 28). (*John Crump.*)

Refusing the Divine call:—The election of the just, and the reprobation of the wicked, are inscrutable mysteries. Yet, as much as is necessary for us to know, Jesus reveals to us in this parable, without satisfying vain curiosity. I. ON THE CALL EXTENDED TO MEN. 1. Nature of this call. (1) It is Divine. (2) It is holy. (3) It is a free call. (4) It is a universal call. 2. Manner of this call. (1) God calls men outwardly: by teaching and preaching, in order to take away the darkness of understanding caused by original sin. (2) God calls men inwardly: by the inspiration of Divine grace. II. ON THE DECLINING OF THE INVITATION. 1. Co-operation with the Divine call is necessary. 2. Man often refuses to co-operate with the Divine call: (1) Because he is attached to earthly things. (2) Because he is enslaved by the vice of pride. (3) Because he is the slave of his own flesh. As the Jews lost all taste for the manna, because they longed for the flesh-pots of Egypt, so all taste for the sweetness of spiritual joys is lost by carnal lust. III. ON REPROBATION. Most awful is the judgment of being excluded from Divine charity and communion; but, at the same time, it is most just. 1. The wrath of the king against those who were invited, but who refused to come, was just. With God, wrath is not the eruption of passion, but the zeal of justice, directed against him who, by not accepting His loving invitation, has insulted His infinite majesty. 2. The sentence pronounced by the king was just. (1) God does whatever is necessary for our salvation. (2) But man, the sinner, is not willing to be saved (Matt. xxiii. 37). Man must do what he is able to do, and pray for what he is not able. 3. His sentence of reprobation is most just. (1) He gives them up to the desires of their heart, as He suffered those who were invited to go after their business (Rom. i. 23, &c.). (2) God invites others instead of those who were first invited, that His house may be filled, and that the latter may be for ever cut off from the hope of recovering their place. Thus David was elected instead of Saul; Matthias instead of Judas. (3) He condemns irrevocably those who decline the invitation (Prov. i. 24–26). (*Nicolas de Dijon.*)

The great supper:—I. THE INVITATION. 1. The time of the invitation. Evening. At the introduction of the gospel dispensation. 2. The nature of the invitation—"Come." (1) Free. (2) Generous. (3) Direct. 3. The persons by whom the invitations were sent—"His servants." Apostles, disciples, &c. II. REJECTION OF THE INVITATION. 1. The unanimity of their refusals. 2. The various reasons which they assigned. (1) The inspection of new-bought property. (2) Engrossing business. (3) Domestic duties. III. FURTHER INVITATIONS ISSUED. 1. How extended the commission. 2. How benevolent the arrangement. 3. How urgent the appeal. (1) That in the gospel, abundant provision is made for the spiritual wants of mankind. (2) That the invitations of Divine mercy include all ranks and conditions of men. (3) That these invitations are free and full, and urgently and sincerely presented by the Lord Jesus Christ. (4) That only self-excluders will be refused a place at the feast of salvation. (5) That it is the duty and interest of all, immediately and gratefully to obey the invitation and sit down at the gracious banquet. (*J. Burns, D.D.*)

The great feast, and its Maker:—I. THE MAKER OF THE FEAST. Christ God-Man, or God in Christ, is a bountiful Benefactor to man. God in Christ is here called a

Man—1. By way of resemblance ; those properties of any worth appearing in man, or spoken of man, being more eminently in God : as (1) Sovereignty ; (2) pity ; (3) rationality. 2. By way of reality. (1) In respect of Christ, by whom this gospel-provision is, wherein God shows Himself such a Benefactor. Christ has (a) the blood of a man ; (b) the bowels of a man ; (c) the familiarity of a man. (2) In respect of man for whom this gospel-provision is, wherein God shows Himself such a Benefactor. The grace of the gospel is called “the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man.” And that—(a) by way of distinction from other creatures in general ; (b) by way of opposition unto fallen angels in particular. (3) In respect of the ministers of the gospel, through whose hands this gospel-provision is distributed. Uses : 1. Observe the condescension of God. 2. The advancement of man. II. THE FEAST. Supper—chief meal of the day : intimating the abundance of the provision made for the recovery of lost man. 1. What is this gospel-provision for the good of souls ? It is the only way of man’s salvation since the Fall, begun in grace, and swallowed up or perfected in glory. 2. How does the provision appear to be so plentiful ? (1) Look at the Maker of the feast. God, rich in mercy, great in love. (2) The materials. Christ Himself. The sincere milk of the word. The promises. Work of grace in soul. Sum up all this : here is solidity, plenty, variety ; here is for necessity and delight, for health and mirth. ’Tis a great supper. (3) The vessels. Ordinances : “golden vials full of odours.” (4) The guests. Such as are clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Kings and priests unto God. (5) The attendants. Ministers instructed by God. III. THE PERSONS BIDDEN. 1. Adam was invited, and with Him the whole race of mankind. 2. Noah was invited, and with him the old world. 3. Abraham was invited, and with him the whole nation of the Jews. 4. Moses was invited, and with him the Jews had a fresh invitation under that pedagogy of his which was to bring them to Christ. Uses : 1. Information. This shows us God’s desire for man’s happiness. He not only propounds a way for man to be happy, but invites man to accept of it. How inexcusable, then, is man if he refuse. 2. Caution. (1) Though men are thus generally invited, yet other fallen creatures have not so much as an invitation ; so that there is somewhat of distinguishing mercy in the very invitation (Heb. ii. 16). (2) Though men are thus generally invited, yet they are very hardly persuaded really to close with the invitation. (3) Though men are thus generally invited, yet they will not be continually invited. (4) Though men are thus generally invited, yet they will be as generally rejected, if they continue slighting God’s invitation. 3. Be exhorted to hearken to this call and invitation of God. To move you to accept : consider seriously—(1) God communes with us in a way of familiarity (Isa. i. 18). (2) God commands us in a way of authority (1 John iii. 23). (3) God beseeches us in a way of entreaty (2 Cor. v. 20). (4) Upon refusal, God threatens us in a way of severity (Prov. i. 24, 32). They who will not feed upon these gospel dainties, “shall eat of the fruit of their own way.” They that sow the wind of iniquity shall reap the whirlwind of misery. *(John Crump.)* The gospel feast :—I. WITH RESPECT TO THE INVITATION. Although the dispensations of God to Jew and Gentile may be different, the declaration of the gospel is the same. It is especially worth noting how perfectly free from all impossible conditions, on the part of man, is the gospel invitation. II. Now look at THE WAY IN WHICH THIS INVITATION WAS RECEIVED. “They all with one consent began to make excuse.” They wanted to do something else instead. And in this reply we see a lesson, how, when the passions of man are set against the truth, how additionally hard and presumptuously bold they make the heart. The spirit which actuated these excuses was worldliness—preferring something to God. And this is strictly true of every one who has not really closed with the gospel invitation now. III. Observe again, that THE PERSONS ETERNALLY EXCLUDED FROM THE GOSPEL-FEAST ARE THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN BIDDEN TO IT ; the invitation is, therefore, real : God means what He says. ‘It was in all good faith that the invitation was given, and it is in all seriousness that God speaks when the invitation has been refused. I warn you against making excuses to-day, lest when you would accept the Lord’s gracious invitation, you cannot ; lest you become too blind to read, too lame to go to the house of God, and too deaf to hear—altogether too infirm to get any good. Now, I repeat to you, you know these things are true ; you understand these things ; you are perfectly well aware that what I say is the exposition of the parable, and you are perfectly aware that as long as you neglect God’s invitation, you are wrong. You cannot say, “Lord, forgive me, for I know not what I do.” You do know ; your conscience speaks to you now : do not harden it by neglect. 1. I would, in

conclusion, say, take these four considerations home with you: Consider, first, to-night, dear brethren, before you lay your heads upon your pillows, the greatness of the Host that invites you. Consider His love, His power, if you apply to Him, to overcome every hindrance, His grace to give you all needful strength, His mercy, which will embrace you in His arms, and take you to His heart. 2. The excellence of the feast. He sets before you salvation, pardon, peace, eternal life. Are not these things worth having? Are they not necessary to the welfare of your soul? Where can you get them, but in the way you are called to accept now? 3. The blessedness of partaking of this gospel-feast. 4. The misery of refusing — of never tasting the gospel-supper — never, never! — never knowing pardon of sin — never knowing peace of conscience. (*J. W. Reeve, M.A.*) *The great supper*:—I. *THE FEAST*. This is the gospel which God has provided for mankind and sinners. Great preparations had to be made before it was available for men. The law which we had broken had to be satisfied; the penalty which we had incurred had to be endured; the obedience in which we had failed had to be rendered. None of these things, however, could be done by man for himself. Christ therefore took human nature, &c. 1. A feast in respect of the excellence of the provision which it sets before us. Pardon of sin, favour with God, peace of conscience, renewal of the heart, access to the throne of grace, the comforts of the Holy Spirit, the exceeding great and precious promises of the Scriptures, and a well-grounded hope of eternal life. 2. A feast in respect of abundance, for the supply is inexhaustible. 3. A feast in respect of fellowship. The blessings of the gospel are for social, and not simply for private, life; and what circle of earthly friends can be put into comparison with that into which we enter when we seat ourselves at the gospel table? Communion, not only with best and wisest of earth, but with redeemed before throne; yea, fellowship with Father, and His Son Jesus Christ. 4. A feast in respect of joy. The Giver of it and the guests at it rejoice together. II. *THE INVITED GUESTS*. The invitation to this feast is given to every one in whose hearing the gospel is proclaimed. A great privilege, also a great peril. God's invitation is not to be trifled with or despised. In the court language of Great Britain, when a subject receives an invitation to the royal table, it is said that her Majesty "commands" his presence there. So the invitations of the King of kings to His gospel banquet are commands, the ignoring of which constitutes the most aggravated form of disobedience. III. *THE RECEPTION GIVEN BY THOSE FIRST INVITED, TO THE CALL WHICH HAD BEEN ADDRESSED TO THEM*. Animated by one spirit, moved by one impulse, under the influence of the same disposition, they all began to make excuse. Each of them considered some worldly thing as of more importance to him than the enjoyment of the feast; and that is just saying, in another way, that they all treated the invitation as a matter of no moment. Their excuses were all pretexts. If the heart is set on anything else, it cannot be given up to Christ; and every excuse that is offered for withholding it, whether the excuse itself be true or not, does not give the real reason for His rejection. That must be sought in the fact that the heart is set on something else which it is not willing to part with, even for Him. It is the old story. "One thing thou lackest:" but that one thing is everything, for it is the love of the heart. IV. *THOSE WHO PERSISTENTLY DECLINE TO COME TO THE FEAST SHALL BE FOR EVER EXCLUDED FROM ITS ENJOYMENT*. V. *NOTWITHSTANDING THE REJECTION OF THIS INVITATION BY MULTITUDES, GOD'S HOUSE SHALL BE FILLED AT LAST*. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *The love of this world is a hindrance to salvation*:—I. *REASONS WHY THE LOVE OF THIS WORLD IS A HINDRANCE TO SALVATION*. 1. On account of its power over the heart. (1) It is not attentive to the greatness of Divine grace. (2) It disregards the means of this grace, through which the sinner must be brought to the fellowship of it. (3) It hardens the heart against the repeated invitations of God. (4) It does despite to the free grace of God, which has at once provided everything necessary for our salvation, and invites us to partake of it without any personal desert. 2. On account of its nature. (1) It is directed to what is earthly, perishable. (a) To goods and pleasures. (b) To honour, influence, and consideration. (c) To ties and connections. (2) It prefers that to what is heavenly and eternal. (3) It lays claim, in doing so, to a right frame of mind (vers. 18, 19), considering itself to have a proper excuse, and thus manifests its ingratitude, levity, and obstinacy. II. *PROOF THAT THE LOVE OF THE WORLD IS SUCH A HINDRANCE*. 1. From the consequences resulting to the despisers. (1) They draw upon themselves the anger of God. (2) They forfeit the offered salvation. 2. From the subsequent procedure of God, who still manifests His mercy and grace; (1) In that He com-

tinues to invite men to the blessings of salvation; (2) and even the most wretched of men; (3) and all, without exception, in the most pressing manner. (*F. F. Lisco.*) *The gospel feast*:—Though this parable resembles, in some respects, that of the marriage feast in the twenty-second chapter of Matthew, it is a distinct and independent parable. 1. What those gospel blessings are to which we are here invited under the comparison of a feast. We are invited, then, to partake of the blessing of knowledge, saving knowledge, the knowledge of God, the knowledge of the truth. 2. Let us observe what is implied in coming to this feast. It supposes, then, a desire and endeavour to obtain these blessings, and an actual acceptance of them just as they are offered. 3. God employs His servants to invite persons of all descriptions to this feast. 4. We are reminded by this parable that multitudes reject the gospel invitation with vain excuses. 5. Once more, this parable teaches that, however many may have hitherto refused the invitation, ministers are bound to persevere in most earnest endeavours to bring in sinners. The office of ministers, in this respect, is weighty and responsible. (*Jas. Foote, M.A.*) *God's banquet*:—From the earliest ages it has been common to speak of God's merciful provisions for fallen men under the imagery of a feast. Thus Isaiah sung: "In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." And so familiar was this conception to the ancient Jews, that many of them were led to indulge the grossest notions about feasting and banqueting in the kingdom of the Messiah. Many of the Rabbins took it literally, and talked and wrote largely about the blessed bread and plenteous wine, and delicious fruits, and the varieties of fish, flesh, and fowl, to be enjoyed when once the Messiah should come. It was to this coarse eating and drinking that the man referred whose exclamation—"Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God"—called forth this significant parable. But, although the Jews much perverted the idea, it still was a proper and expressive figurative representation of gospel blessings. The Saviour Himself takes up the idea, approves and appropriates it, and proceeds to speak of the provisions of grace as a *δειπνον*—a supper—a feast—a banquet. Very significant also is this imagery. 1. A feast is not a thing of necessity, but of gratuity. 'If a man makes an entertainment to which he invites his friends and neighbours, he does it out of favour and good feeling towards them. It is because he takes an interest in their happiness, and is pleased to minister to their enjoyment. And precisely of this nature is the blessed gospel. 2. Again: a banquet is furnished at the cost of him who makes it. And so the gospel comes to men free of expense to the guests. All that it embraces is proposed without money and without price. 3. A banquet also implies the spreading of a table, plentifully supplied with all inviting, wholesome, and pleasant viands. It is an occasion when the very best things, and in the greatest profusion, are set before the guests. True, "the kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink"; but it is to our inner life what the most precious viands are to the body. The soul has appetites, and needs meat and drink as well as the physical man. It must be fed, nourished, and refreshed with its appropriate spiritual aliment, or the man must starve and die, notwithstanding the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And this life-giving spiritual food is what God has provided for us in the gospel. 4. A banquet is also a social thing. It involves the coming together of multitudes to exchange civilities, to form and strengthen fellowships, and to enjoy communion with each other, as well as with the maker of the feast. The gospel embraces a holy fellowship of believers with believers, and of each with God. It embraces a coming together of men in common brotherhood and communion with each other and with the Master, as full of sweetness, cheer, and blessedness as the viands of which they are invited to partake. Christianity is a social religion. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*) *Come; for all things are now ready.*—*The gospel invitation*:—I. THE FEAST. 1. The author of this feast. 2. The provisions. (1) Abundant. (2) Various. (3) Suitable. 3. The characteristics of the feast. (1) It is a sacrificial feast. (2) It is a great and universal feast. (3) It is a gratuitous feast. (4) It is a heavenly feast. II. THE INVITATION—"Come." Now this implies distance. All men far from God, &c. Prodigal. 1. To what must they come? To the Word of God. To the preached gospel (Rom. x. 15). 2. How must they come? By repentance. Humbly, believingly, unreservedly, immediately. 3. To whom may this invitation be addressed? To the young, middle-aged, and to the old. To the moralist, profligate, and backslider. To the rich and poor, the learned and illiterate. III. THE MOTIVE URGED—"For all things are now ready." 1. The Father is

ready. To embrace the repenting prodigal. 2. The Son is ready. To speak forgiveness and peace. 3. The Spirit is ready. To regenerate and save. 4. Ministers are ready. "And now then as ambassadors," &c. 5. The ordinances are ready. And you are freely welcome. 6. The Church is ready. To own you as her sons, &c. 7. Angels are ready. To bear the tidings of your repentance to glory. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *The gospel invitation*.—The invitation to come is in harmony with the kingdom of heaven, and in harmony with the character of man. An invitation implies a happiness. When a calamity or a sorrow is before us, we are not invited to it—we are drawn hither by an irresistible power. But when earth has a joyful event, or one that promises happiness, invitations are issued, because it is not conceivable that man would need to be driven toward happiness. Thus the invitation harmonizes with the kingdom of Christ, for it is a happiness. Whether you contemplate that kingdom as reaching through eternity with its blessedness, or as filling earth with its virtue and faith and hope, it is the highest happiness of which we can conceive. It is, indeed, a feast of love, of knowledge, of virtue; and hence is a blessedness worthy of the word "Come." The word is also in harmony with the character of man, for, being a free agent, he is not to be forced towards blessedness, but only invited. I. Now this word "COME" CONTAINS NO DEEP MYSTERY. It is not a tantalizing request to do what we cannot do. It is not irony, as though one should say to a blind man, "See this rose!" or a deaf mind, "Oh! please hear this music." The Bible is the last book in the world to be accused of trifling with the soul, for it is the soul it loves, and for it it prays and weeps. It is not to be inferred from this that the heart can correct itself and forgive itself and sanctify itself; but what is to be inferred is that the will is not a mockery, not a dead monarch, but is a king upon a throne, and can command the soul to go many a path that leads to God. You can all start upon a heavenly road, for there is not a movement of the heart toward God that is not a part of this large "Come." Where the human ends and the Divine begins no one can tell, any more than in nature one can tell where the rain and earth and sunshine cease to work in the verdure, and where they are supplanted by the presence of God. There is no tree that stands in the woods by its own act. God is there. So no Christian stands up strong in his own sole effort. God's grace is somewhere. But yet, for all this, great is the power and responsibility of the soul. Nothing in religion can be true that renders void the law of personal effort. II. But we pass by this "coming," and go to the second thought—"ALL THINGS ARE READY." I shall not restrict myself here to the exact import of the text, but shall accept of the words in all their breadth and application. 1. Religion is ready for you. Having passed through myriad shapes—Pagan, Mosaic, Grecian, Roman—religion seems to have found in the gospel of Christ a final readiness for human use. Reason may learn to deny all religion, science may hear and then teach atheism, but when the thought turns to a positive religion, there is at last one ready, the religion of our Lord; it is ready for you and me. But when we have declared it ready as a philosophical system, we have only told half the truth, for to this it adds the readiness of an ever-living Father and Saviour standing by each of you as a mother, and waiting to welcome you. 2. Let us proceed now to our second head: You are ready for this religion. I do not mean that you feel ready, for there are doubts and sins that stand between the soul and religion. The obstacle is not in the world without, but within. But I have said you are ready. In what sense? In this: that your life has come to its responsible, intelligent years. The lineaments of God—knowledge, wisdom, reason, love, hope, life—have all unfolded, and here we are all to-day, moving in all the spiritual qualities of Deity, and yet are willingly in the vale of sin. The ignorance of youth has passed away: we are children no more. Vice has revealed her wretchedness, and virtue her utility and beauty, and with intellects so discerning, and with an experience so complete, and then clothed with the attributes of God, we are all marching to the grave, a solemn gateway between action and judgment, between time and eternity. These facts make me declare we are ready for that sentiment called religion, that makes man one with God. I confess that we all are ready for the gospel of Christ—ready for its virtue, its mediation, its sunny hopes. 3. Society is ready for you to accept the gift. I hope that old day has wholly gone when men were afraid to profess Christianity lest an outside world might ridicule the "new life." Little of this fear is any longer perceptible. I imagine that the growth of individual liberty—the growth of the consciousness of it, rather—has silenced both the ridicule and the sensibility to it. It is only ignorance and narrowness that ever ridicule the profession of religion.

But we pass from this conscious readiness to that of need and fact. Society is toiling to-day under the awful calamities of vice, slavery, dishonour, and crime, and is sorrowfully ready for millions of wicked ones to read and imitate the life of Jesus Christ. When society was ruled by brute force, as in the days of Cæsar or Peter the Great, it mattered little what might be in the hearts of the populace, for, if it was crime, there was a policeman for each citizen; and if it was sorrow in the heart of woman or child or slave, nobody cared. But in our day, when the vice of the heart breaks out, and there is more reliance upon education than upon the knout or chains, and when the upper classes have reached an education that makes indifference to sorrow impossible, in such an age society begs the Christian religion to come to its help. In the old empire of Cyrus there were, all along the highways, criminals with hands or feet cut off, or heads of offenders raised up, to keep the populace in constant fear. What that age demanded in its heart was not a gospel, but an ever-present police. It did not know of anything better. But our land, based upon the nobleness and equality of man, and springing up out of brotherly love, and every day strengthening this sentiment by education, silently begs that its millions, high and low, shall come unto Jesus Christ. (*David Swing.*)

The banquet:—1. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is ready. No banqueter ever waited for his guests so patiently as Christ has waited for us. 2. Again, the Holy Spirit is ready. That Spirit is willing to come to-night at our call and lead you to eternal life; or ready to come with the same power with which He unhorsed Saul on the Damascus turnpike, and broke down Lydia in her fine store, and lifted the three thousand from midnight into midnight at the Pentecost. With that power the Spirit of God this night beats at the gate of your soul. Have you not noticed what homely and insignificant instrumentality the Spirit of God employs for man's conversion? There was a man on a Hudson river-boat to whom a tract was offered. With indignation he tore it up and threw it overboard. But one fragment lodged on his coat-sleeve; and he saw on it the word "eternity"; and he found no peace until he was prepared for that great future. Do you know what passage it was that caused Martin Luther to see the truth? "The just shall live by faith." Do you know there is one—just one—passage that brought Augustine from a life of dissolution? "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." It was just one passage that converted Hedley Vicars, the great soldier, to Christ: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." Do you know that the Holy Spirit used one passage of Scripture to save Jonathan Edwards? "Now, unto the King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory." 3. The Church is ready. 4. The angels of God are ready. 5. Your kindred in glory are all ready for your coming. Some of these spirits in glory toiled for your redemption. When they came to die, their chief grief was that you were not a Christian. They said: "Meet me in heaven"; but over their pillow hung the awful possibility that perhaps you might not meet them. (*Dr. Talmage.*)

God's anxiety for man's salvation:—I. GOD IS VERY URGENT WITH MEN TO ACCEPT OF GOSPEL-PROVISION FOR THE GOOD OF THEIR SOULS. He speaks once and again (Jer. vii. 25). This truth will thus appear: 1. By the several acts of God put forth in gospel-provision for man's salvation. (1) He has prepared the provision without any desert or desire of ours (Titus iii. 4, 5). (2) The means of grace are vouchsafed to many that do not improve them (Matt. xi. 16, 17, 21). (3) God propounds a way, and offers help to do us good, before we inquire after it (Isa. lxi. 1). (4) God forbears His wrath when we do not presently elose with His mercy. He stays, though man lingers. (5) God reproves where we are defective, and happy are the wounds of such a friend. He who first reproves is unwilling to punish. (6) God stops our way when we are running headlong to our own misery (Hosea ii. 6). Many times He keeps us short that He may keep us humble. (7) God makes us consider our ways, and recollect our thoughts, whither our course tends (Haggai i. 5). (8) Notwithstanding our obstinacy, God persuades us by a sweet and holy violence. He not only stops our way, but changes our wills. 2. By the manner of God's speaking to sinners in the Scriptures. (1) By way of interrogation—"Why will ye die?" (Ezek. xviii. 31). (2) By way of lamentation (Luke xix. 41, 42). (3) By way of protestation with the strongest asseveration (Ezek. xxxiii. 11). Uses. 1. This informs us that the destruction of man is a thing displeasing to God. 2. But though God be thus urgent about the salvation of man, yet He is quick and peremptory in the destruction of many. Although He seem to come slowly to punish man, yet His hand will fall heavily upon those who abuse His patience. 3. Answer God's urgency with you to accept

of gospel-provision. (1) Be urgent with your own hearts to turn to the Lord by faith; and then be as urgent to bless His name for turning them. (2) Urge your hearts to turn from all sin by true repentance. II. THE SERVANTS SENT OUT. 1. All the prophets. 2. Pre-eminently, Christ Himself. 3. The servants of Christ. III. THE TIME OF SENDING THE SERVANTS. Supper-time; the fulness of time, the very nick of time for man's redemption. Now is the accepted time; improve it. IV. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE MESSAGE IS TO BE DELIVERED. By word of mouth. Uses. 1. Information. (1) The gift of utterance is very requisite for a minister (Eph. vi. 19). (2) The calling of the ministry is very useful (Titus i. 2, 3). 2. Ministers should not only preach with their tongues, but likewise with their hearts feelingly, and with their lives. 3. Let us be thankful to God that the Word of faith is so nigh us in the preaching of the Word (Rom. x. 6, 7, 8). Manna falls at our very doors; we have but to step out and take it up. V. THE WORD OF INVITATION—"Come." 1. Whither God would have us come. (1) To ourselves (Luke xv. 17). (2) To His people (Heb. xii. 22). (3) To Him. (a) The Father would have us come (Jer. iv. 1). (b) The Son would have us come (Matt. xi. 28). (c) The Spirit would have us come (Rev. xxii. 17). He comes to us, that we may come to Him to get victory over our sin. 2. By what means we should come. (1) By the use of all means of grace (Psa. xcv. 6). (2) By the exercise of the truth of grace, and especially the acting of faith (Heb. xi. 6). (3) By pressing forward towards the perfection of grace (Phil. iii. 12). 3. In what manner we should come. (1) Humbly (Luke xv. 19). (2) Speedily (Luke xix. 6). (3) Joyfully, as we come to a feast. VI. THE READINESS OF ALL THINGS. 1. The mind of God, concerning the salvation of all His elect, is ready (2 Tim. ii. 19). 2. The work of Christ for the recovery of lost man is ready (Heb. x. 12). The incarnation, passion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, are all over. 3. The remission of sin upon the score and account of Christ is ready (Neh. ix. 17; 2 Cor. v. 19). 4. The glorious inheritance in heaven is now ready (Heb. ii. 16). Uses. 1. For information. Men has nothing to do toward his own happiness, but to receive what God has prepared, and to walk as he has received it. The receiving is by faith. 2. For caution. Though all things be said to be "now ready," we must not think, as if all were but now ready: we must know that Christ is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. xiii. 8), so that Christ's blood in its virtue, and God's acceptance was of force for man's salvation long before He came personally into the world. Then, again: though all things are said to be "now ready," yet there is much to be done before all the elect come to heaven; many enemies of Christ must be pulled down, &c. 3. Be exhorted to answer this readiness of God. (1) Be ready to receive this grace of the gospel. (2) Be ready to express this grace of the gospel. (a) In acts of piety towards Him. (b) In acts of charity towards men. (*John Crump.*) *The invitation*.—Now we come to our Lord's description of what a really religious life is. He gives it to us under the figure of a feast. Let us try and get some lessons from this; for when our Lord employs a figure, we may be sure He has a meaning in it. What are the thoughts connected with the figure? In the first place, A FEAST IS DESIGNED FOR THE SATISFACTION OF OUR NATURAL APPETITES, is it not? We go to a feast, not that we may be hungry, but that we may be fed. Wherever Christ goes, the first thing He proposes to do, my dear friends, is to satisfy the wants of our souls. He knows better than we what those wants are, and how incapable we are of satisfying them; and you know it too, if you will but reflect. Is there not in your daily occupations, and pleasures, and cares a certain secret sense of something wanting? When you succeed in life, do not you feel strangely disappointed with the results of success? How little pleased you are with that which you thought might be expected to give the most exquisite pleasure! Oh, my young friends, how strange it is that we all fall into the fallacy, or, at any rate, so many of us do, of supposing that we can make up in quantity for that which is radically deficient in quality. You understand what I mean. Here is a boat-load of shipwrecked mariners, tossing about on the wide waste of waters. We will suppose that one of them, burning with thirst, dips his fingers into the briny ocean, and just puts two drops of the water on his tongue; does that satisfy him? Not a whit; on the contrary, it increases his thirst. Suppose the man thinks, "What I want is increased quantity; two drops will satisfy no man's thirst; if I can only get enough I shall surely be satisfied." And suppose he were to lean his head over the gunwale of the boat, and take a deep draught of the brine, would that satisfy him any more than the two drops? Some time ago a friend of mine was coming home

from Australia in a ship that took fire. Those on board were saved in two boats, one a large and the other a small one. On board the smaller boat was this gentleman and his wife, and into it had been cast, in the confusion and hurry of the moment, several cases containing solid gold to the value of many thousand pounds in each. In the large boat there was a considerable quantity of provisions, but in the smaller boat there was a very slender supply of provisions, but a large amount of gold. The men pulled away from the burning ship; there was a stiff breeze rising, and they knew that in all probability they should not see each other in the morning dawn; so just before they separated for the night, they began to overhaul their provisions. The men on board the smaller boat found that they had only a meagre supply. My friend remarked that he should never forget the moment when three or four stalwart sailors lifted up a huge case of gold, held it before the eyes of the men in the other boat, and shouted across the water, "Ten thousand pounds for one cask of bacon!" A big price, was it not? The men would not look at it! That one cask of bacon was worth all the gold in the world to them. Why? Because the meat was congruous to their natural appetite, and the gold was not; they could feed themselves with the one, but not with the other. Now, young man, the world is whispering in your ear: What you want is, not to change your mode of satisfying your appetite, but to have a little more. You are not very rich, you cannot indulge yourself in going to the theatre every night? perhaps you can only go once a fortnight or once a month; make a little money; get on in life; set up in business for yourself, and then you will be able to go every night in the week if you like. 2. Then, again, a feast is not only an occasion for satisfying our wants; IT IS ALSO USUALLY AN OCCASION FOR MERRIMENT, HILARITY, ENJOYMENT, IS IT NOT? We do not go to a feast to wear very long faces, to look very mournful and miserable. It is true, men sometimes do look very grave at feasts, because they are so unlike what feasts ought to be; there is so much form and ceremony, and so little social enjoyment in them. Everything is real that God gives. Blessed are they who are permitted to sit down at the board which has been spread by the hands of Jesus. But you say, "Do you really believe it? Is it true? Do you mean that it is all a lie that the devil has been telling us—that if you become a real Christian, you will grow so gloomy, and look so sad, and that life will lose all its charm? Is that really false? Surely it never can be." Why do so many people say this? I will tell you. Look yonder. There is a man who is a Christian—at any rate, he calls himself so; and, dear me, what a miserable sort of being he is! Yes, with shame and sorrow I admit it; there we discover the foundation of the devil's lie. The truth is, there are so many of us who name the name of Christ, but do not give our selves wholly up to God. There are many people who call themselves Christians, but who give occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme. There is many a Christian, for instance, who does not walk by faith, but by unbelief. Look at a man like Paul; there you find one who has committed himself to God's will. At first sight the man of the world might say, "Well, he gets a rough life of it. I should not like to lead such a life, tossing about to and fro over the wide world like a waif and stray in human society, with nobody to say a kind word to him, sometimes shipwrecked, sometimes exposed to perils of robbers, sometimes thrust outside the city. Dear me, I should not like to lead such a life!" Would you not? Look a little closer, my dear man. Look at the man's face; listen to some of the openings of his heart. Amid all his outward trials, difficulties, and persecutions, he says he is always rejoicing. Are you always rejoicing? Where is the worldly man in London who is always rejoicing? Ah, who are so happy as real Christians? Young man, when you form your idea of a Christian, take care that you get hold of the genuine article. Suppose I were to say, "Have you ever seen a rose?" "Well, no," you might reply; "I have heard a good deal about the rose, but I have never seen one." And suppose I were to say, "I will show you one; come along with me," and then were to take you down to one of the purloons of London, to some miserable, sodden-looking, uncultivated little garden, and show you a poor, half-dead, struggling plant, just trying to put out a few little crimson leaves, which were already being mercilessly nipped and shrivelled up by the chemical compounds which make up the air of this city of London. The thing is already decaying; there is no fragrance about it, no beauty, no perfection or symmetry of form. Suppose I say, "There is a rose! did you ever see such a beautiful thing in your life?" And suppose there was a friend from the country beside us; would he not say, "Don't call that a rose. The man will turn back, saying, 'I have seen a rose; but I wouldn't go a couple of yards to see another.' Take him

down to my garden in the country, and show him the standard rose-bush outside my door; he will remember that if he has never seen one before. Come with me, my lad, and I will show you what a rose is like." Now, when you form an idea about a Christian, don't get hold of some poor, blighted Christian, shrivelled up by the east wind of worldliness; don't get hold of a Christian who tries to serve two masters—God and the world too; don't get hold of a Christian who leads a life of chronic unbelief, a sort of asthmatic Christian, who cannot get his breath at all. No, no; get hold of a Christian in good, sound health, who can honestly say, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Then compare his life with your own; and if you do not come to the conclusion that that man is, all round, a hundredfold happier than you are, or ever can hope to be, so long as you remain a child of the world, then I will say that my gospel is no longer worth preaching, and the Word of God no longer worth trusting. But you will be constrained to make the admission. 3. Again, what is a feast? It is a time for feeding the body, a time for enjoying ourselves; IT IS ALSO A TIME FOR PLEASANT SOCIAL INTERCOURSE. I find that a great many people are kept back from Christ, especially young men, because they think they would have so much to give up in the way of friends. Not very long ago a gentleman said to me, "One of the things that struck me most after my conversion was the effect on my relations with other people. I always passed for an affectionate husband, and loving father; but really, really, as I looked at my wife and my children, it seemed as if I loved them with an entirely new affection, as though I had never really loved them before. I loved them with such a new and mighty love, that it just seemed as if I had become their father or husband over again. But that was not all. When I came into contact with other Christians, I found out that I got to know more of, and to be really more attached to, men whom I had only known ten days or a fortnight—real Christians—than I was to men whom I had been meeting day after day in business, or social life, and coming constantly in contact with, long, long years before. I seemed to know more of a man in a week than I had been able to know of a man of the world in a twelvemonth before. So wonderful was the change in my own personal feelings towards others, that I felt that the number of my brothers was indefinitely multiplied." My friends, it will be so. Believe me, where the grace of God gets into the human heart it makes us brothers. (*W. H. Aitken.*) *Offered mercy*:—Let us, then, consider the readiness of all things as a reason for coming to Christ now. And as the simplest way of doing this, let us consider what it is that hinders us from coming. No external force; you act freely in refusing to come. What inward cause, then—why do you not come? Alas! I need not ask; for in the way of every sinner who knows what it is to think, there always rises up one barrier which effectually stops his course till God removes it; it is guilt—the paralyzing and numbing sense of guilt. The very same thing that creates the necessity of coming, seems to render it impossible. God is a holy God, a just God, and a Sovereign. But, perhaps, your way is not yet open; your obstacles are not yet all removed. Whatever you may think of the benevolence of God, you cannot lose sight of His justice. However His compassion might consent, His holiness, His truth, His righteousness, still stop the way. But now, perhaps, you feel another hindrance, one of which you took but little note before. Though God be ready to forgive you for the sake of Christ's atoning sacrifice, you find a hindrance in yourself, in your heart, in your very dispositions and affections. Expiation, pardon, renovation, the grace of the Father, the merit of the Son, the influence of the Spirit, the Church on earth, and the Church in heaven, safety in life, peace in death, and glory through eternity, a good hope here, and an ineffable reality hereafter—all things, all things are now ready. Will you come? If not, you must turn back, you must retrace your steps, and take another view of this momentous invitation. Higher we cannot rise in the conception or the presentation of inducements. If you must have others, they must be sought in a lower region. The feast is a figure for salvation or deliverance from ruin. To refuse it, therefore, is to choose destruction. This must be taken into view, if we would estimate the motives here presented. Such is the brevity of life, and such the transitory nature of the offer of salvation, that even the youngest who decides this question, may be said to decide it in the prospect of death, and on the confines of eternity. (*J. A. Alexander, D.D.*) *Gospel invitations should be personal*:—Do you know why more men do not come to Christ? It is because men are not invited that they do not come. You get a general invitation from your friend: "Come around some time to my house and dine with me." You do not go. But he says, "Come around to-day at four o'clock and bring your family, and

we'll dine together." And you say: "I don't know that I have any engagement; I will come." "I expect you at four o'clock." And you go. The world feels it is a general invitation to come around some time and sit at the gospel feast, and men do not come because they are not specially invited. It is because you do not take hold of them and say, "My brother, come to Christ; come now! come now!" How was it that in the days of Daniel Baker, and Truman Osborn, and Nettleton, so many thousands came to Jesus? Because those men did nothing else but invite them to come. They spent their lifetime uttering invitations, and they did not mince matters either. Where did Bunyan's pilgrim start from? Did he start from some easy, quiet, cosy place? No; if you have read John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" you will know where he started from, and that was from the City of Destruction, where every sinner starts from. Do you know what Livingstone, the Scotch minister, was preaching about in Scotland when three hundred souls under one sermon came to Christ? He was preaching about the human heart as unclean, and hard, and stony. Do you know what George Whitefield was preaching about in his first sermon, when fifteen souls saw the salvation of God? It was this: "Ye must be born again." Do you know what is the last subject he ever preached upon? "Flee from the wrath to come." Oh! that the Lord God would come into our pulpits and prayer-meetings, and Christian circles, and bring us from our fine rhetoric, and profound metaphysics, and our elegant hair-splitting, to the old-fashioned well of gospel invitation. (*Dr. Talmage.*)

Attendance on Holy Communion:—I. In the first place, then, WHAT IS NOT PRESUMPTION WITH REFERENCE TO THE MATTER BEFORE US? The invitation—"Come, for all things are now ready," may be applied to that Holy Communion to which all who flee to Jesus are invited. 1. And I would observe, in the first place, that it is not presumption to be obedient to the Lord's command. Knowledge ought to induce obedience. The victim is slain, the sacrifice is offered; Jesus has "died, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." He who has done all this as our Surety enjoins this ordinance upon us, and tells us to "do it in remembrance of Him?" Gratitude should induce obedience. "All things are ready." 2. But, secondly, it is not presumption to accept the invitation of our heavenly King. If we are invited there is no presumption, and there can be no presumption in accepting the invitation. 3. And so, I observe, thirdly, that it is not presumption to come to the Holy Communion, as all other worthy communicants do come. How do those who are worthy come? that is, those whom God esteems to be worthy? Do they come because they are holy? that is, because they are perfectly free from sin? because they have no temptations around them, to which sometimes they feel inclined to give way? No; it is that, feeling their weakness, they flee to God for grace in this holy sacrament of His own appointment. II. But now, let us look at the other side of the question, and examine WHAT IS PRESUMPTION IN THIS MATTER OF WHICH WE ARE SPEAKING. 1. I answer, then, to this inquiry, that it is presumption for any one to profess practically to be wiser than God. This is what those do, who neglect Holy Communion. 2. But further, it is presumption, I will allow, to attend this holy ordinance in thoughtlessness and willing ignorance. 3. Then, thirdly, it is presumption to attend this holy ordinance while living in wilful and acknowledged sin. 4. Lastly, it would be presumption to come to the Lord's table in an unforgiving spirit. (*W. Cadman, M.A.*) All things are ready; come:—I. IT IS GOD'S HABIT TO HAVE ALL THINGS READY, whether for His guests or His creatures. You never find Him behindhand in anything. He has great forethought. 1. God's thoughts go before men's comings. Grace is first, and man at his best follows its footsteps. 2. This also proves how welcome are those who come. II. THIS READINESS SHOULD BE AN ARGUMENT THAT HIS SAINTS SHOULD COME continually to Him and find grace to help in every time of need. 1. All things are ready; therefore come to the storehouse of Divine promise. 2. Come to the mercy-seat in prayer; all things are ready there. 3. Christ is always ready to commune with His people. 4. For a useful life in the path of daily duty, all things are ready. 5. For a higher degree of holiness all things are ready. III. THE PERFECT READINESS OF THE FEAST OF DIVINE MERCY IS EVIDENTLY INTENDED TO BE A STRONG ARGUMENT WITH SINNERS WHY THEY SHOULD COME AT ONCE. 1. All things are ready. 2. All things are ready. 3. All things are now ready. Therefore, come now. IV. THIS TEXT DISPOSES OF A GREAT DEAL OF TALK ABOUT THE SINNER'S READINESS OR UNREADINESS. He only needs to be willing. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Form of Eastern invitations:—When a person of respectable rank in society proposes to celebrate a feast in his house, he forthwith circulates his invitations to

the friends he wishes to be of the party, either by card or by a verbal message, carried by a servant of the house, or a person hired for the purpose, and superbly decked, according to the rank of his employer. The following is a specimen of the form of invitation: "Such a person [naming him] sends best compliments to such another person [naming him also], and begs to inform him that as to-morrow there is a little gaiety to take place in his house, and he wishes his friends, by their presence, to grace and ornament with their feet the house of this poor individual, and thereby make it a garden of roses, he must positively come and honour the humble dwelling with his company." Having after this fashion gone to all the houses, and returned with assurance from the invited friends of their intention to come next day, a messenger is again despatched for them at the appointed time, to inform them that all the preparations for the banquet are completed. This second invitation is included by our Lord, and is very characteristic of Eastern manners. When Sir John Malcolm was invited to dine with the eldest son of the Shah, the invitation was given two days before, and one of the prince's attendants was despatched at the hour appointed for the banquet to tell him that all things were ready. And Morier also informs us, that having been engaged to dine with a Persian Khan, he did not go till his entertainer had sent to the English ambassador and his train to say that supper waited. After the same manner, the invitations to the great supper described in the parables, seem to have been issued a considerable time before celebration; and as the after invitation was sent, according to Eastern etiquette, to the guests invited, they must be understood as having accepted the engagement, so that the apologies they severally made were inadmissible, and could be regarded in no other light than as an affront put upon the generous entertainer, and an ungrateful return for all the splendid preparation he had made for their reception. (*Biblical Things not Generally Known.*)

Chinese invitation:—Amongst the ancient Chinese an invitation to an entertainment is not supposed to be given with sincerity until it has been renewed three or four times in writing. A card is sent on the evening before the entertainment; another on the morning of the appointed day; and a third when everything is prepared. The invitation to this great supper is supposed to have been given when the certain man had resolved upon making it; but it is again repeated at supper-time, when all things are ready. Now, as it does not appear that the renewal of it arose from the refusal of the persons invited, of which no hint is yet given, it is clear that it was customary thus to send repeated messages. The practice is very ancient among the Chinese, and no doubt it prevailed amongst the Jews; it certainly gives a significance to the words not otherwise perceived. They all with one consent began to make excuse.—*The reasons why men are not Christians:*—1. Our first point relates to the CAUSES OR REASONS WHY MEN ARE NOT CHRISTIANS, OR IN OTHER WORDS, WHY THEY WISH TO BE EXCUSED FROM BEING CHRISTIANS—which is the form in which it is presented in the text. There is something remarkable in the aspect which the subject assumes on the first view of it. Men ask to be excused, as if it were a matter of favour. It is natural to ask, From what? From a rich banquet, says the parable from which my text is taken. From the hope of heaven through Jesus Christ. From loving God and keeping His commandments. From that which is fitted to make a man more useful, respected, and beloved in life, remembered with deeper affection when he is dead, honoured for ever in heaven. In searching for the causes or reasons why men wish to be excused from becoming Christians, I may be allowed to suggest that they are often under a strong temptation to conceal those which are real, and to suggest others which will better answer their immediate purpose. My idea is, that the real cause is not always avowed, and that men are strongly tempted to suggest others. The actual reason may be such as, on many accounts, a man would have strong reluctance to have known. The grand reason why men are not Christians, as I understand it, is the opposition of the heart to religion; that mysterious opposition that can be traced back through all hearts, and all generations, up to the great apostasy—the fall of Adam. 1. A feeling that you do not need salvation in the way proposed in the gospel; that you do not need to be born again, or pardoned through the merits of the Redeemer. The feeling is, that your heart is by nature rather inclined to virtue than to vice, to good than to evil; that the errors of your life have been comparatively few, your virtues many. 2. You suppose that in your case there is no danger of being lost—or not such danger as to make it a subject of serious alarm. The idea is this, that if the duties of this life be discharged with faithfulness, there can be no serious ground of apprehension in regard to the world to come. 3. A secret

scepticism about the truth of Christianity. The mind is not settled. The belief is not firm that it is a revelation from heaven. 4. A fourth class are deterred by a feeling that the Divine government is unreasonable and severe. In one of His parables the Saviour has taught us expressly that this operated in preventing a man from doing his duty, and being prepared for His coming (Matt. xxiv. 24, 25). 5. A fifth class are deterred from being Christians by hostility to some member or members of the Church. 6. A sixth reason which prevents men from becoming Christians is worldliness—the desire of this world's goods, or pleasures, or honours. II. Our next point is, TO INQUIRE WHETHER THESE REASONS FOR NOT BEING A CHRISTIAN ARE SATISFACTORY. Satisfactory to whom? you may ask. I answer, To conscience and to God. Are they such as are sufficient reasons for not loving God? 1. You dare not yourselves urge them as the real cause why you do not attend to religion, and embrace the offers of mercy. They are so little satisfactory to your own minds, that when we come to you and urge you to become Christians, we are met with other reasons than these. You resort to some difficulty about the doctrine of ability, and the decrees of God, some metaphysical subtlety that you know may embarrass us, but which you think of on no other occasion. Who will dare to urge as a reason for not becoming a Christian the fact that he is sensual, or proud, or worldly-minded, or ambitious, or covetous, or self-righteous, or that he regards God as a tyrant? 2. These excuses will not stand when a man is convicted for sin. All, when the hour comes in which God designs to bring them into His kingdom, confess that they had no good reasons for not being His friends, and for their having so long refused to yield to the claims of God. 3. The same thing occurs on the bed of death. The mind then is often overwhelmed, and under the conviction that the excuses for not being a Christian were insufficient, the sinner in horror dies. But I will not dwell on that. I pass to one other consideration. 4. It is this. These excuses will not be admitted at the bar of God. (*A. Barnes, D.D.*) *Making excuses*:—I. ALL EXCUSES FOR DISOBEDIENCE TO GOD ARE VAIN. 1. One is, God makes us sinners, either by creating sin as a substantial property of the soul, or by the laws of propagation, just as the other properties of the mind, or as the members of the body are propagated. But can this be so? No. Sin is man's work. Sin is moral action—the act or exercise of the heart. God creates the man a free moral agent; and the man makes himself a sinner. "O, Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." 2. Again, it is a sort of standing excuse with some sinners, when urged to perform their duty, to reply, We cannot. But what is the nature of the inability? Their own consciousness, and the Word of God, alike testify that it is the simple inability of disinclination. 3. Others say there are so many hypocrites in the world, that we have our doubts whether, after all, religion be a reality. But why should there be hypocrites, if religion itself is not a reality? If there were no true bank-notes, no bank, would there be counterfeits? Do you excuse one debtor from the payment of his debts, because others have paid you in base coin? There is one principle which exhibits them in all their vanity. God has not revealed His law and precepts for men to alter. He knew all the reasons which would or could exist to impair the obligations of each, to extenuate the guilt of transgression; and as a righteous Sovereign, if one such reason could exist, would have made the exception. But He has not made it. II. ALL EXCUSES FOR DISOBEDIENCE TO THE WILL OF GOD ARE CRIMINAL. To make an excuse for what we have done is impenitence, and for not doing what we ought to do, is determined disobedience. III. THIS PRACTICE IS MOST RUINOUS. The real nature of disobedience to God cannot be altered by any delusive covering we can give it. To that heart which "is deceitful above all things," self-delusion is an easy task. Nor is there any form in which it can prove more certainly fatal than by leading us to make habitual excuses. And who shall hope to conquer his sins who refuses to see them; who shall turn from and escape the danger on which he shuts his eyes? The sinner must take the shame and guilt of sin to himself, and clear his Maker, or nothing can be done for him. Concluding remarks: 1. How infatuating is the power of sin. 2. How opposite is the spirit of excuses to the spirit which the gospel inculcates. The one is the spirit of treachery and impenitence—the other, of frank, open confession, and of devout contrition. The one a spirit of determined perseverance in sin, the other a spirit of prompt, cheerful obedience. The one prays, "Have me excused"; the other, "Search me, O God!" 3. Let all self-excusers reflect how they must appear at the judgment of the great day. Should they be permitted to offer these excuses at the bar of God, how will they look? You plead your inability to love God. Plead it, then,

at the judgment-seat of Christ. Go there and expose your ingratitude and enmity, by telling the Judge on the throne, the Saviour that died for you—that you could not help trampling His blood underfoot, by not believing the record of His Son. Plead the incessant occupation of your time—exhibit then its results—show your bags of gold, your houses, your farms, your shops, and tell Him these so occupied you, that you had no time for the concerns of your soul. Bring forward these and other apologies. Will they dazzle the eye of Omniscience—will they beguile the Judge of the quick and the dead? You know it will not. (*N. W. Taylor, D.D.*)

Sinful excuses.—1. Some men will say they have no need to come to Christ. This arises from insensibility, and ignorance of their lost condition. 2. Others imagine they are already come to Christ; and the act being performed, they have no need to repeat it. Their hope is too firmly fixed to be shaken, and their confidence too deeply rooted to be overthrown. Is there not daily need of Christ? Have there been no departures? and do they not call for a return? Is faith to be exercised but once? Why, then, are we told, that “the just shall live by his faith”? 3. Pre-engagement is another excuse which sinners make for not coming to Christ. 4. Some say they have tried, but cannot come to Christ. 5. Others, who are deeply bowed down in spirit, do not so much plead their inability, as their unfitness and unworthiness. They do not say they cannot come, but dare not come. There are some preparations and dispositions necessary, and they are destitute of them. Willingness is the only worthiness that Christ looks for: so that we are to come to Him not with qualifications, but for them. 6. Some stumble at the austerities of religion, and the dangers to which it will expose them. They own that it is glorious in its end, but complain that there is something very discouraging in the way. 7. It is the fear of some, that if they do come to Christ, they shall either be rejected, or dishonour Him. 8. Many who do not come to Christ now, purpose to do so hereafter. What is hard to-day will be harder to-morrow; and it is only the present hour, the present moment, that we can call our own. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*)

A bad excuse is worse than none.—I. Let us try to account for the fact, the sad fact, that men are so ready to make excuses rather than to receive the word of God. We account for it in the first place by the fact that they had no heart at all to accept the feast. Had they spoken the truth plainly, they would have said, “We do not wish to come, nor do we intend to do so.” If the real secret of it was that they hated Him and despised His provisions, is it not melancholy that they were not honest enough to give Him a “nay” at once? It may be that you make this excuse to satisfy custom. It is not the custom of this present age to fly immediately in the face of Christ. There are not many men of your acquaintance or mine who ostensibly oppose religion. It may be you make these excuses because you have had convictions which so haunt you at times that you dare not oppose Christ to His face. Satan is always ready to help men with excuses. This is a trade of which there is no end. It certainly commenced very early, for after our first parents had sinned, one of the first occupations upon which they entered was to make themselves aprons of fig-leaves to hide their nakedness. If you will fire the gun, Satan will always keep you supplied with ammunition. II. We come to recount these excuses. Many will not come to the great supper—will not be Christians on the same ground as those in the parable—they are too busy. They have a large family, and it takes all their time to earn bread and cheese for those little mouths. They have a very large business. Or else, if they have no business, yet they have so many pleasures, and these require so much time—their butterfly visits during the morning take up so many hours. Another class say, “We are too bad to be saved. The gospel cries, ‘Believe in Jesus Christ and live,’ but it cannot mean me; I have been too gross an offender.” Then comes another excuse, “Sir, I would trust Christ with my soul this morning, but I do not feel in a fit state to trust Christ. I have not that sense of sin which I think to be a fit preparation for coming to Christ.” I think I hear one say, “It is too soon for me to come: let me have a little look at the world first. I am scarce fifteen or sixteen.” Others will row in the opposite direction, pleading, “Alas! it is too late.” The devil first puts the clock back and tells you it is too soon, and when this does not serve his turn, he puts it on and says, “The hour is passed, the day of grace is over; mercy’s gate is bolted, you can never enter it.” It is never too late for a man to believe in Jesus while he is out of his grave. Here comes another, “O sir, I would trust Christ with my soul, but it seems too good to be true, that God should save me on the spot, this morning.” My dear friend, dost thou measure God’s scorn with thy bushel? Because the thing seems an amazing thing to thee, should

it therefore be amazing unto Him? "Well," says one, "I cannot trust Christ, I cannot believe Him." It means, "I will not." A man once sent his servant to a certain town to fetch some goods; and he came back without them. "Well, sir, why did you not go there?" "Well, when I got to a certain place, I came to a river, sir, a very deep river: I cannot swim, and I had no boat; so I could not get over." A good excuse, was it not? It looked so, but it happened to be a very bad one, for the master said, "Is there not a ferry there?" "Yes, sir." "Did you ask the man to take you over?" "No, sir." Surely the excuse was a mere fiction! So there are many things with regard to our salvation which we cannot do. Granted, but then there is a ferry there! There is the Holy Spirit, who is able to do all things, and you remember the text, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" It is true you cannot make yourself a new heart, but did you ask for a new heart with sincerity and truth? Did you seek Christ? If you say, "Yes, I did sincerely seek Christ, and Christ would not save me," why then you are excused; but there never was a soul who could in truth say that.

III. How FOOLISH THUS TO MAKE EXCUSES. For first remember with whom it is you are dealing. You are not making excuses before a man who may be duped by them, but you make these excuses before the heart-searching God. Remember, again, what it is you are trifling with. It is your own soul, the soul which can never die. You are trifling with a heaven which you will never see if you keep on with these excuses. Remember, again, that these excuses will look very different soon. How will you make excuses when you come to die, as die you must? (C. H. Spurgeon.)

The recusancy of the guests:—I. GOSPEL-PROVISION, AS IT IS GENERALLY OFFERED, SO IT IS GENERALLY REFUSED. 1. Refused by most of the (1) Rulers (John vii. 48; 1 Cor. ii. 8); (2) Learned men (Acts xvii. 18); (3) Common people. 2. In what respects this refusal is general. (1) In respect of the doctrine of the gospel, which men generally look upon as strange and incredible, and so will not believe, but rather scoff at it. (2) In respect of gospel discipline, which seems hard, and so men will not submit to it. (3) In respect of gospel professors. Men generally despise them, and care not for their company (John vii. 49). 3. Why this refusal is so general. The three grand enemies of man's salvation are opposed to the gospel. (1) The world, or the powers of the earth without us. (2) The flesh, or the power of corrupted nature within us. (3) The devil, or the power of hell beneath us. Uses. 1. Information. Christ's flock is a little flock (Luke xii. 32). Multitude is no true note of a Church. 2. Caution. (1) Though men generally refuse true happiness, yet men generally desire some kind of happiness (Psa. iv. 6). Their natural desire is a stock to graft the plant of grace upon. (2) Though men generally refuse the gospel, yet there may be more receive it than we are aware of (Rom. xi. 3). (3) Though men generally refuse the gospel, yet many do receive it (Heb. ii. 10). (4) Though the Jews generally refused the gospel, yet they shall generally receive it (Rom. xi. 26). 3. Exhortation. Do not follow a multitude to do evil. II. UNANIMITY OR CONSPIRACY IN REFUSAL. 1. The refusers of the gospel agree in that, though they may differ in many respects, such as nation, religion, affection, &c. 2. How they agree. This will appear—(1) In the design they drive at, which is to oppose the power of godliness. (2) In the principle they act from: natural light, carnal reason, which is not only dim-sighted about, but prejudiced against, spiritual things. (3) In the rule they walk by, which is their own will, their lust their law (Eph. ii. 2, 3). (4) In the way which they take to carry on their opposition to the gospel. (a) They lay their heads together as one in a way of consultation. (b) They join their hearts together in a way of approbation, taking pleasure in the sins of one another (Rom. i. 32). (c) They strike their hands together as one, in a way of confederation (Psa. lxxxiii. 5). III. READINESS TO REFUSE. IV. THE PLAUSIBILITY OR HYPOCRISY OF THE EXCUSES. Men will have none of Christ, and yet would put it off fairly if they could (Psa. xxxvi. 2). 1. What are the excuses or pleas which sinners make? (1) They plead multiplicity of worldly business. (2) The frequency and urgency of outward temptations. (3) They plead the society and fellowship of others in their way. (4) The weakness of their nature. (5) The smallness of the sin. (6) Their good intentions. (7) The unnecessariness of such strictness in religion. (8) The impossibility of fulfilling God's law. (9) The inequality of God's ways. 2. Why do sinners make excuse? (1) It is the nature of fallen man to do so (Gen. iii. 12, 13). (2) Sin is so ugly that sinners will not have it appear in its proper colours; therefore foul sins must have fair names to make them go down

the better. If sin were to appear in its cursed nature and wretched effects, it would so frighten men that they would take no pleasure in committing it. Uses, 1. This informs us of the madness of wickedness. 2. Though sinners excuse their sin, yet their sin will accuse them. 3. Do not deceive yourselves by vain excuses or false reasonings (James i. 22). (*John Crump.*) A common sin:—The making of idle excuses is the oldest, as it is the commonest of sins. It began with Adam in Paradise, and ever since that time men have, more or less, continued with one consent to make excuse. First, let us look at some excuses which people make for putting off repentance. Now listen to the story of one who repented late, but in time. During the London Mission, a lady, one of the Church workers in a certain parish, noticed a young girl lingering one night by a church door, where the mission service was about to commence. She invited the girl to enter, but she excused herself on the plea that she had no Bible. The lady offered her own, and accompanied the girl into church, where she was evidently much affected. On leaving the church, the lady begged her companion to accept the Bible, in which her own name was written, and the girl passed out of her sight. Next morning the lady visited a hospital, where she was accustomed to read to the patients, and a nurse informed her that they had a Bible bearing her name which had been brought in on the previous night. The young girl, after leaving the mission service, had been run over, and taken mortally injured to the hospital, carrying the Bible with her. She died the same night, and her dying words were these: "Thank God it was not before last night." Another common excuse for delaying repentance is this, "I am no worse than others." I was speaking lately to a mother about the sin of her daughter, and she excused her on the plea that she was no worse than others in a higher position, and instanced a lady who had sinned in the same way. But, my brethren, surely sin is none the less a sin because it is committed in the company of others. Again, people excuse themselves by saying, "It is so hard to repent." But it is still harder to die in our sins, and receive the wages of sin, which is death. It is hard to give up bad habits, but it is harder still to be ruined by them. Now let us look at another class of excuses which people make for staying away from church. One of these excusers says, "Church-going will save no one." That is quite true. "You may come to church in a wrong state of mind, or from an unworthy motive, and no good will come out of it. Attendance at church is a means of grace, not grace itself. If rightly used it is a means of placing us in the way of salvation, and of keeping us there. If you get into a railway carriage at the station, the mere act of doing so will not take you to London, but if you do not first get in, the train cannot carry you there. Another self-excuser says, "Church-going is a mere form and show; pure religion is not outside, but inside one." It is perfectly true that pure religion is inside, and not outside. But surely we must show outside what we feel inside. Suppose that your landlord were to reduce your rent 20 per cent. because of the bad times, and were to give your children a handsome present as well, you would, I think, go up to his house to thank him, and you would not consider it a mere show. You would not leave him to imagine the gratitude inside you. Well, one of the chief reasons why we come to church is to thank God for His goodness, and to openly declare "the wonders that He doeth for the children of men." Another meets us with the old, old plea, "I was not very well on Sunday." It is a curious fact that more people are unwell on Sunday than on any other day of the week. They are quite able to attend to business on Saturday, and are quite fresh and ready for work on Monday, but they are poorly on Sunday. "I am afraid the disease is one of the will rather than the body. I will only speak of one more excuse, as common as it is foolish. "I don't go to church myself," says a man, "but my wife goes." So much the better for the wife, so much the worse for the husband. You cannot do your duty by deputy, and you cannot save your soul by deputy. Every one of us must answer for himself. There is an old legend of a man who never attended church, but whose wife went regularly. Both died, and when they came to the gates of Paradise the woman passed in. But when the husband presented himself, the keeper of the gate said, "Your wife worshipped God for both of you, now she has gone into Paradise for both of you, you cannot enter here." My friends, you who have been trying to excuse yourselves from doing what is right, think on these things." (*H. J. Wilmot Buxton, M.A.*) Excuses:—There is scarcely a sin which we can commit, for which, to ourselves if not to others, we cannot find some excuse. If we have told a direct falsehood, we say to ourselves that we were surprised into it: we were asked a question on the sudden; and in the hurry, taken off our guard, we

answered it one way when we should have answered it another: it was the fault of the master who asked such a question; why could he not have let it alone? For other acts of sin there is the excuse of temptation: we should not have done it but for bad example, or the suggestion or solicitation of another; it was scarcely our act; circumstances caused it; and so Providence itself is sometimes made to share the blame with us. So much for sins of commission; each has its appropriate excuse. And even more is this so with our omissions. We scarcely ever neglect a private duty without making to ourselves some excuse for it. We omit or postpone our morning prayer; which of us does not excuse this for the time, and then find that the excuse extends itself indefinitely to other times? The Bible is left unread one day; we have an excuse for it; the next day it is still less thought of, still more easily let alone. But excuses made for these single acts of neglect are only examples of those with which we palliate a life of neglect. Do not make excuse for forgetting God. Think of it as a sin, a daily, hourly sin. Think of it too as a loss, a daily, hourly diminution or deprivation of happiness. Think that, if you continue thus, you are undone; that it is only by turning to God that you can escape. This, which sounds little, is a great thing. Put away excuses. Attempt none to yourselves; attempt none to God. No man will make an excuse to himself for not being happy; then do not you. Excuses will never cease till earth ceases. Then they will. Before the judgment-seat of Christ no excuses will be heard; none will be attempted. Then, in the words of Scripture, "every mouth will be stopped." (*Dean Vaughan.*)

Excuses:—If I invite you to my house: "My friend, on Tuesday evening I shall be at home, amid my pictures you admire, with music which you love, gathering a circle of gentlemen whom you like; will you make one of us?" Then, if you do not care a straw for my friendship, had as lief as not I rate you a boor, you would probably return me no answer, or tear up my message in the face of the messenger, or say, "Go tell him I won't come—and that's all." But if you return me an excuse, you acknowledge our friendship and yourself a gentleman. Perhaps the above is a small class; at any rate it is not a class to be reached by kind appeals. Such persons do, indeed, become converted, but it is through some fear, by the lash, by some shock. You are, however, not of that class; you render an excuse. Observe, then; taking up my former homely illustration, which, lest I offend, we will transpose. You invite me to your pictures, music, board, entertaining. I read, thinking: "This man would do me a favour, would make me happy; he is my father's friend and mine; has seen me in trouble, coming to me: now sees me prospered, and would rejoice with me, going to him; but my feet are slipped, I am sitting at my ease, by my own grate, with Motley or Dickens. I prefer home." Is this an excuse sufficient, and would our friendship outlive such a truth-telling? No; I might lie: "I am sick, excuse me, have an imperative engagement." These society lies!—and these are good reasons, if real reasons. You cannot see my heart to detect the truth or falsehood. Neighbours, hear me, for eternity's sake, receive it. Christ's word is: "Come, for all things are now ready." Your excuse must be a sufficient excuse; and it must be an honest excuse, for He can see clean through camel's hair and silk, through Melton and broadcloth, to the secret reason written on the heart. "My business is such that I pray Thee, O Christ, have me excused." Well, let us suppose you are, in this, sincere. Is yours an immoral business? No. Do you transact it in a dishonest or otherwise immoral way? No. What, then, do you mean? I mean this: Times are hard, trade must be watched. "I am well enough off now;" and this time it is a woman who speaks. Why should she worry herself? She has a good husband; to be sure he is not a Christian, but where is a nobler man? What lacks she yet? Nothing. Good lady, may I ask, dare you put that in a prayer: "O Lord, because I lack nothing, I pray Thee excuse"? Dare you say in good English, "Lord, my heart is full. That husband! If I was widowed, childless, roofless, desolate, then I—"? You ask me if I mean to hint that you love these too much? A thousand times then, no; but that you love the Giver too little, yes. "I pray Thee have me excused, because I am good enough now; I need no conversion." Well, neighbour, that means something or nothing. Tyndall calls me to his marvellous evenings of experiment with light. It is from the point very far from me to profess a knowledge of grammar, addition, subtraction, as thorough as my neighbour. Can the great philosopher teach me ought—no matter how much I know of algebra? Christ professes to have come not to recall the righteous but sinners. They that be whole need not a physician, but the sick. And I humbly

urge upon you, the purest moral man of this good audience, that this call is sent for your ears. He invites you to His heart-feast. If now you can truthfully say : " Christ, I am good enough ; my soul is as beautiful as Your soul ; my thoughts are as lofty as Your thoughts ; the walls of my spirit are hung with pictures as rare as Your own, and the feast of my heart at its own board leaves nothing to be desired," then your excuse means something. You ought to be excused. Indeed, you are not invited. No, ninety and nine of a hundred do not mean what they say when declaring that they are good enough, needing no conversion. It is too bare conceit. " I could not hold out ; have me excused." Friend, be honest ; such is not your real reason. You are not the man to undertake and fail ; or to refuse to undertake what you really desire. The truth is, you do not desire to follow Christ. " I do not believe in the Book." Be honest. You have tried to disbelieve ever since you backslid, five years ago ; yet you do believe in the Bible. The truth is, your proud heart will not say " Forgive." (*E. J. Haynes.*)

Invitation and excuse :—Excuses are specified by our Lord, and these all relate to necessary and even laudable things. These excuses may be taken as in division or in succession ; that is to say, one man may be supposed to make one excuse, and another man another, or you may suppose the same man making all these excuses one after another. For Truth does not make to a man one good offer, and then no more ; but if we are invited by Truth, we are invited again and again. Perhaps it will be most useful to ourselves to think of these excuses as made in succession. Thus, we are under an engagement to give our attention to things just and true ; we are under it by virtue of our training, by virtue of our own voluntary effort directed to good ; we are under an engagement to attend at the banquet of Truth. Well, now the hour arrives ; Truth wants us, and the messenger comes. We are very sorry, but that " piece of land "—still we consider ourselves under the engagement ; we shall be more fortunate next time ; for, after all, it is we that have to regret our failure. Another time, then, arrives ; we are very sorry, but that " piece of land " has engaged us so much, that we have found it necessary to obtain several " yoke of oxen " to bring it into proper condition ; we are very sorry ; still we consider ourselves under the same engagement, and we hope to be more fortunate the next time. Then the messenger comes a third time ; our services are indeed wanted now ; our presence cannot be dispensed with ; and now we say, " This is unfortunate. Our land is in excellent condition ; indeed we have had so much to look after, that we have felt it necessary to take a wife, in order that our domestic affairs may be superintended. We have met with an amiable person, possessing an agreeable fortune, and we have concluded a domestic and commercial arrangement." And now, perhaps, Truth leaves us, and " lets us alone." But three times may represent any number of times, and Truth often comes more than three times. Let, then, Truth be supposed to come a fourth time. Well, now we are all very much engaged ; the whole house is in a flutter of delight ; there is a feast to celebrate the birth of our firstborn ! So, then, Truth comes a fifth time, just when one of the children is sick of fever ; and we look at Truth quite reproachfully, and say, " You would not expect me to come now, would you ? " And once again Truth comes, for the last time ; and now the house is in confusion, and there are signs of distress, and Truth is informed that we were not content, though we were prospering exceedingly well ; but that, hearing of some gold-diggings, we had gone out, and whilst we were in the golden pit, a great piece of quartz rock had fallen and crushed our chest right in, and there was a nugget found in the very middle of our heart, and so an end of us ! That is a plain picture of what happens again and again. There are all sorts of nuggets—they need not be made of literal gold—there are all sorts of nuggets upon which a man sets his heart ; and often the very attainment of the nugget, when he gets it right into the centre of that heart, is his utter destruction. For now the world will never get any more benefit of him ; and Truth has visited him for the last time. (*T. T. Lynch.*)

Business hindering religion :—I said one day to a respectable tradesman, " When are you going to begin to think of eternity and come to the house of God ? " His reply I shall never forget. " I know, sir, that I ought to come ; but it's no use ; my mind is so full of business, I can think of nothing else." (*Thain Davidson, D.D.*) *Human depravity at the bottom of all excuses* :—I was at a conference held about the state of the people in Liverpool. It was a large conference, with the Mayor in the chair. They were conferring about why it was that so many of the working people particularly would not go to church or chapel, but would lie about on Sundays and seem to have nothing but an animal life. One man after another made a speech about it. You never heard such a number of reasons given : too hard work on Saturdays—which seemed to me to be

a strange thing; or they had no place near them which suited them; or the preachers did not preach well enough; or the sermons were too long; or they did not like pews; or they did not get the best seats when they went to church; or pews-rents were required. You never heard such a number of reasons—the people that did not go to church were not to blame, it was always the people about the church, or in the church, who were to blame, till at last an old man got up (I think from his speech he was a Scotchman, and said, “Mr. Mayor, there is one reason that strikes me that I have not heard a word about yet”—they had spoken for an hour and a half—“I think it is the reason of the whole thing.” We were all struck dumb to hear what this was. “What I have to say is that the most of it comes from human depravity.” (*D. Fraser, D.D.*)

Distinguish between reasons and excuses:—An “excuse” is an entirely different thing from “a reason.” “A reason” comes into the mind before a conclusion; “an excuse” follows after. The conclusion rests upon the “reason.” Its only wish is to appear to rest upon the “excuse.” “A reason” is a reality; an “excuse” is, generally, an invention: or, at the best, an “excuse” is the second or inferior “reason.” It is not the primary, actuating motive. The “reason” Adam ate the fruit was that he liked it; the “excuse” was, “She gave it me.” The “reason” why the man “hid his talent,” was, that he was indifferent and lazy—“a wicked and slothful servant”; the “excuse” was, “I knew thee—thou art an austere man.” The “reason” the Jews killed Christ, was, because they were jealous of Him; and hated Him for His holiness and His reproofs; the “excuse” was that He spoke against Cæsar, and uttered blasphemy. The “reason” why all the men who were “bidden to the great supper” refused to come, was that they did not care for it; or preferred something else; the “excuses” were the same—of duty, and prior or more important engagements. If you knew God—and what those “things” are “which He has prepared for them that love Him,” all “excuses” would be flung to the winds. It would not be, “Have me excused!” but, “I come!” “I come!” “Me first—me now—me for ever! Lord, bid me—Lord, let me—Lord, make me come!” (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*)

Excuses:—God’s supper is ready, and the call to it is pressed with urgency, but people make excuses, and do not come. People have no mind for salvation. The many have too much to do, too many pressing cares, too many honourable engagements pre-occupying their attention, and so cannot comply with the calls of God. / Such useful citizens, such respectable men of business, such thinkers for the comfort of their fellow-citizens, and for the welfare of the State, are, forsooth, not to be expected to give their time and thoughts to piety and to God! Of course, *they* are to be excused! But, alas for thee, deluded man, if with thy lands, or thy oxen, or thy “material interests,” or even with thy learned investigations, though they should be in divinity itself, thou hopest to compensate for thy neglect of the calls and invitations of thy Maker! But others are so happy in the objects of their earthly affection, so blessed with things of their own, that they see no reason to disturb or burden themselves with attention to these sacred matters. Why, the world was made to be enjoyed! God would not have created for us all these pleasant things if it were not excusable in us to make the best of them while we can! Why should we incommode our pleasant homes and joyous circles with religion’s rigid rules? Surely the good Father in heaven does not wish to make us unhappy. He will not be offended with what harms no one, and yet is so delightful to us! He will *excuse* us! Alas, they have married themselves to earthly loves, and lusts, and vanities; and so they “cannot come.” Effeminate pleasures, though mingled with pains, and transient as the honeymoon, are their apology for letting go their chance to secure the eternal blessedness of heaven. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*)

The excuses:—“I pray thee, have me excused.” I do not think you can offer a worse prayer than that. Of all the prayers that ever left human lips, and of all the desires that ever formed themselves within human hearts, I think this is the most fatal. Must I not go as far as to say that such a reception of the offer of God’s mercy constitutes the grand crowning sin of man? One might have expected there would have been quite a demand for invitations, that everybody would have been besieging the house and asking the chamberlain, or the secretary, or the great person, whoever he might be, “Can you give us an invitation to the feast?” When one of our princes is married, only a certain number of invitations are issued; and only a certain number of people can be present on the occasion. Supposing the tickets for such a ceremony could be sold, I wonder what they would fetch. I should not be surprised if some gentlemen in London would be ready to pay down

a hundred or five hundred pounds, just for the privilege of being present and being able to say, "I saw Prince So-and-so married." But the honour cannot be bought for money; you must occupy a high social position before you can get such an invitation. Whoever heard of a man in such circumstances making an excuse? Now about these excuses. I want you to observe, my friends, how these men received the message. In Matthew's Gospel we read of some who "entreated the servants spitefully, and slew them." And there has been always a class of that kind—I mean to say, that there is always a certain number of persons bitterly hostile to religion. They hate it. If they could, they would kindle the fires of Smithfield again. There was another class of persons to whom the invitation came; and who are they? The man whom he now addresses is a most polite and civil person, a perfect gentleman. Oh, dear me, no! Say a rough word! Never thought of such a thing. "My good sir, now I hope you will understand that the very last thing I wish is, to convey to the mind of that admirable person who sent you on your errand anything like a feeling of contempt for the kind invitation which he has been good enough to offer me. On the contrary, I have the greatest possible respect for him. I should be very sorry indeed if anything I said hurt his feelings in the least degree; but the real plain truth of it is, that you know, sir, I am in a very awkward position. I should be very glad to go to the feast; I have no doubt it is an excellent feast. It is a great honour to be asked to go to such a place; at the same time, it so happens very unfortunately that I have got something else on hand. I have just bought an estate over there; I am just going to start to see it. That is the way it was done—civilly, respectfully, I may almost say, reverently: but it was done all the same. And that is just the way it is done by many still. When I ask the question, How is the Lord Jesus Christ rejected in our England in the nineteenth century? I find my answer, not merely in the open blasphemy, not merely in the atheism and unbelief. I find the terrible answer coming back to me, "He is rejected by the people who go to church, who hear the message of salvation sounded in their ears from Sunday to Sunday, who have had great privileges, and who will tell you they have great respect for religion." They subscribe to the Church Missionary Society, or to any other society they think will do good. Now observe the excuses that these men made did not refer to things evil in themselves. Then, observe, once again—and this seems to me to be a very interesting and instructive point—it was not, after all, the pressure of necessary engagements that kept these people back from the feast. That is a very remarkable thing. The man does not say, "I am just on the point of transacting a bargain for a piece of land; but the deeds are waiting to be signed; and I cannot sign the deeds before I see the piece of land." It is not a case of necessity of that kind. Observe the lesson. It is not the necessary occupations of life that keep men back from Christ. What is it? What did the man want to go and see his land for? In order that he might gloat over his acquisition. He might look round and round and say, "Dear me! it is a nice snug place after all—as sweet a little house as ever I saw—nicely situated; the land, too, is the best in the country side. I have made a very good bargain; I think I shall make myself very comfortable here." The man's mind is given over to the thing, and he has no time to accept the invitation to the feast. So it is with many a man still. It is true to life, as God's Word always is. There is no harm in domestic happiness; but how many a man there is that allows the pleasures of his home to take the place that belongs to God; that puts those home comforts before his soul as a kind of substitute for the presence and power of God in his heart? Whenever a man does that, he turns the pure and holy relationships of life into the devil's own snare, and the things which were for his peace become to him an occasion of falling. So they made their decision; and that decision was—"I pray thee have me excused." What I said at the start of my sermon, I say again; it is the worst prayer ever offered, and, like many a bad prayer, my friends, it was a prayer that was answered. And I am persuaded that whenever men offer such a prayer, they will get an answer. "Yes, not one of them shall taste of My supper." So they were excused; and by-and-by the table was spread, and the guests were gathered together: and the minstrels tuned their harps, and the song commenced, and the feast, and the joy, and the pleasure; and the King came in to see the guests. Yes, and all the while these men were excused. That man over there is walking round and round his land, until at last I think I can hear him saying to himself, "Well, after all, there isn't much to be got out of a field." Ah, he is beginning to tire of it already! And the other man feels it, too. After all, you cannot make a heaven out of five yoke of oxen. And my eye follows the

man that had married his wife—where is he now? Look! he and his wife are bending over the corpse of their firstborn child; and the hot, scalding tears are falling. He has found it out now; after all, domestic happiness is a very different thing from heaven. My brothers, are there any of you that are saying in your hearts, "I pray Thee have me excused"? Well, let me ask you, what are you asking the Lord to excuse you from? "O Lord, I pray Thee have me excused from being happy. I want to go on in my misery; let me alone. O Lord! I have got a great load of unforgiven sin in my heart; I don't want to part with it just yet. 'I pray Thee have me excused.'" My young friend there went to the meeting, last night, at Exeter Hall, and cast his burden on his Saviour. I met him in the street; I scarcely knew him. "Have you heard the news, old fellow? I am a new man." He was evidently very happy; I never saw a man so happy. Lord, I pray Thee have me excused from such happiness. (*W. Hay Aitken, M.A.*)

Ready excuses:—I have often wondered at the cleverness with which people make excuses for neglecting heavenly things. A poor woman was explaining to me why her husband did not attend church. "You see, poor working folks nowadays are so holden down and wearied out, that they are glad to rest a day in the house when Sabbath comes." An unopened letter was lying on the table, which she asked me to read, believing that it was from her sick mother. It was a notice to her husband that the football team, of which he was captain, was to meet on Saturday at 3 p.m., and that, like a good fellow, he must be forward in good time. And that was the man for whom my pity was asked, as being so worn out with his work that he could hardly creep up to the church! Another woman admitted to me that she never read her Bible, but pleaded that she was too busy, and had too many cares. My eye caught a great bundle of journals above the clock. She confessed that these were novels, on which she spent twopence halfpenny every Saturday, and that she read them on the Sabbath. If you wish an excuse, the smallest thing will give you stuff enough for the weaving of it. (*J. Wells.*)

Excuses of non-communicants:—I. First, then, it is not uncommon for people to say, "I do not pretend to be a scholar, and I do not understand the meaning of this sacrament." Can you really say that you have been earnest to gain instruction? or have you not rather been well satisfied to be ignorant? Let me ask you, dear brethren, if the life of your body depended on your knowing how to plough, or sow, or reap, would you not take pains to learn? Should you not think yourselves justly blamed if you did not? II. I come now to consider another excuse, which is most commonly made, for not attending this sacrament—"I am not fit to come." III. Another excuse is, "I am now too much troubled with worldly cares; I cannot attend as I ought to my soul; but I hope the time will come when I shall be more at liberty." IV. Again, youth is made an excuse for not coming to the Lord's table. God says in the Bible, "Those that seek Me early shall find Me" (Prov. viii. 17). (*E. Blencowe, M.A.*)

On the Lord's supper:—The causes which prevent men from observing this ordinance of our religion are various. It may be presumed that a leading cause of the neglect of this ordinance is a thoughtlessness of its nature and obligations. 1. The pressure of the business and cares of this world is urged by many as a reason why they neglect to receive this sacrament. 2. Further. A sense of sinfulness deters many from approaching the table of the Lord. They are so oppressed with the consciousness of having transgressed many commands, and omitted many duties, that they dare not go to so holy an ordinance. 3. There are many persons, who have a lively sense of the holiness of this ordinance, and wish to join in the celebration of it, who are deterred by a fear that they shall not be able afterwards to live up to their obligations. 4. Another cause which prevents men from receiving this sacrament is the existence of anger and animosity in their bosoms—the consciousness of ill-will between them and some of their fellow-beings. 5. It is urged by some who neglect this ordinance that they see many go to the Lord's table who seem not in any respect to be benefited by it. There are many persons deterred from receiving this sacrament by a particular passage of Scripture, which is frequently misunderstood. I mean that striking observation by St. Paul, that "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." There are two causes from which the misapplication of this passage proceeds—from affixing a meaning to the word "damnation," which in the original it does not bear, and from indefinite or erroneous ideas of the unworthiness which the apostle condemns. By damnation is not here meant, as by many is supposed, everlasting destruction, but immediate disapprobation, the displeasure of the Most High; which displeasure is manifested

as the apostle states, by visiting the unworthy recipients with divers temporal judgments; and this too in order to their final salvation; if, haply, being chastened of the Lord, they may not be condemned with the world. And, accordingly, the same word which is here rendered "damnation" is rendered in one of the following verses of the same chapter, by "condemnation." Moreover, we should have definite ideas what it is to eat and drink unworthily. The Corinthians, whom the apostle here addresses, had fallen into an irreverent, and in some cases profane, manner of celebrating the Lord's Supper. They brought their own bread and wine; they blended this sacred mystery with their common feast; the rich waited not for the poor; the poor were jealous of the rich. (*Bishop Dehon.*)

Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city.—*Home missions*.—I. THE PARTIES TO WHOM THE SERVANT WAS DIRECTED TO MAKE KNOWN HIS BENEVOLENT COMMISSION. Stripped of its figurative clothing, the passage intimates to us the calling of the Gentiles upon the rejection of the gospel by the Jews. But the compassion of the Lord was as large as His provision and the creature's necessity; therefore the servant was sent further from home—he was to "go out into the highways and hedges," to pick up the vagrants and the wanderers, to address those for whose condition no man had cared, and to invite and urge them to partake of the banquet of heavenly mercy. The parties to whom our attention is to be directed are presented to us under a twofold aspect. They are described—First, by the nearness of their residence to us. They are the miserable and the distressed in the streets and lanes of the city. Next to our own individual conversion to God, our attention is to be directed to the conversion of those around us. But the persons to whom this merciful attention is to be directed are described—Secondly, by their miserable and destitute condition. The dismal description which is given us of these wretched beings in the parable is borrowed from temporal things, and is expressed in terms which convey a lively picture of misery and wretchedness. II. THE METHOD TO BE EMPLOYED BY THE SERVANT IN ORDER TO BRING THESE PERSONS TO THE ROYAL BANQUET. He was to "bring" them in, and "compel" them to come. 1. The servant must "compel" sinners by setting before them their guilty and perishing condition. 2. There must be, in connection with this, an exhibition of the Saviour's grace. 3. He must "compel" sinners to come in by unfolding the encouragement which is given to comply with the invitation and to believe the gospel. And these encouragements are neither few nor small. 4. The servant of the Lord must "compel" men by a solemn testimony of the guilt and danger of a refusal. (*J. E. Goode.*) *The kingdom of God thrown open*.—I. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS OPENED AMONGST MEN. It is here now. We have not to go to it—it has come to us. There is nothing to wait for; all things are ready. The love, the light, the pardon, the mercy, the sonship, the welcome, the plenty, are all waiting. II. GOD INVITES ALL MEN INTO HIS KINGDOM. The feast was always intended for all. God's own people were to be admitted first, as being members of His household; and they were expected to entertain the strangers who should afterwards come in. But when the time came they failed. So without them, instead of through them, the gates of the kingdom had to be thrown open, and the universal invitation given. They shut themselves out, but not, therefore, would God permit the despised and perishing everywhere to remain uninvited. The feast should not therefore spoil. The abundance of the feast shows it to be for all. The freeness of it says it is for all. Those for whom it is prepared—the stricken and needy everywhere—show it to be for all. Can infinite love be restrictive? Can infinite pity be elective? III. THE KINGDOM IS NOT YET FULL. We need not be afraid of inviting; and we need not be afraid of coming. There is room yet. Grace will endure a vacuum as little as nature. (*W. Hubbard.*) *Personal labour for souls*.—"How shall we gain the masses?" "Go for them!" was Moody's rough but sensible response. Let the text be our guide. Scripture, reason, history, and experience corroborate it. There is a vast work outside our ordinary Church connection. Those whom we daily meet in business, in the neighbourly intimacies of life, or in circles of pleasure—many of them are neglecters of God and His worship. Shall we let them die? Our Christianity needs to be more abundant in labour; our prayers need feet! 1. This work is to be done by you, or the blood of souls will be found on your skirts. 2. You have the facilities for doing it. Let not religion be the last thing on your tongue in "society." Remember, you must give account for your opportunities. 3. It is inhumanity to neglect this work. 4. It takes but little time. 5. It is the most successful kind

of work. It builds up Sunday-school, prayer-meeting, Christian character. 6. No special talents are needed. Only a special consecration. The diversity of works fits to the varied talents we have, as one cog-wheel works into another. But only the gifts that are on the altar can God use. (J. L. Peck, D.D.) *The power of earnestness in converting souls*:—I once knew a wonderfully successful winner of souls. Few were so blessed. Yet he could not speak six words without stuttering and stammering painful to hear. Everybody would have said, "He'd better keep still"; but everybody would be wrong. The love of Christ will burn up the chaff of your excuses. The angel was terribly in earnest when he laid hold of Lot and brought him out of Sodom. If you are thus roused, then your vigils of prayer and hand-to-hand labour for souls will prove the reality of your Christian life. A gay girl went to Troy to buy a ball-dress, fell in the way of a newly-converted companion, and came under the power of an endless life; returned home, roused her father out of his formal piety, and then sought out and led to Christ the pastor's daughter. These two girls started a prayer-meeting, and in ten days from the time that the unworn, now useless, ball-dress was brought home, so mighty a work of grace had begun that the pastor sent to Troy for help in the new and unlooked-for burdens thrown upon him. "Go ye out into the highways. Compel them to come in; for yet there is room." (Ibid.) *The gospel feast is free to the vilest*:—Christ has spread the table, and our poverty, our imperfections, our limping steps, our blindness of spiritual sight, are the reasons why He would have us come. The island of Molokai, in the Hawaiian Archipelago, is set apart for the occupancy of lepers. These poor, filthy beings stagger about there in all stages of disease, a most pitiful sight. Now, suppose a famous physician lands upon the island, and sends out his invitations through the community. He has spread a table large enough for all, and on it placed a variety of delicacies such as none there had ever tasted, which are a sovereign specific against the prevalent disorder. "Come," says he, "poor diseased company, and sit at my table just as you are. This feast will cure you. You are incurable otherwise." All Molokai is in commotion. The lepers gather in knots and talk the matter over. "Oh," say they, "what a looking company are we to sit down at a rich man's table! We had better wait awhile. By and by, perhaps, we shall be more presentable, and then we will go." So they send up a delegation to the doctor, with their compliments and thanks, but beg to be excused till they are more deserving of the honour. And so the good man sadly turns away, leaving the islanders slowly to rot into their graves. The passage before us presents a case precisely parallel. Christ invites a sin-stricken world to His feast. The fact that we are sin-stricken, unworthy, lost, helpless, and hopeless is why He asks us to come. (A. P. Foster.) *Fetch them in*:—Samuel Martin tells this beautiful story of a ragged-school teacher who went out into the streets to bring in neglected children. He found a child, the very incarnation of wickedness and wretchedness, and led her to the school. There she heard expounded and applied the parable of the Prodigal Son. Shortly after the child was seized by fever, and the teacher visited her. In one of his visits he read this parable, and when he came to the words, "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him," the child exclaimed, "Oh! that was just like me! That's good; say it again. 'A great way off'; what, ever so far away, away, like me with the devil? That must be far from God and the Lamb. Yes! I was a great way off. How good! How kind! But I'm afraid I have been worse than that bad son. Still I have said, 'Dear Jesus, I want to love You, I want to get away from the devil; please help me.' And I think He heard me, for I have felt somehow different ever since. I am not afraid now; no, not one bit." When death was so near that it was supposed all power of utterance was gone, she aroused herself, and said in a clear and distinct voice, evidently referring to destitute children allowed still to wander through the streets and lanes of the city, "Fetch them in! Oh! be sure and fetch them in. Fetch them in, and tell them of Jesus, tell them of Jesus; oh! be sure and fetch them in." Yet there is room.—*The gospel feast*:—"Yet there is room." 1. In the merits of Christ's sacrifice. 2. In the grace of God's Spirit. 3. In the mansions of God's house. 4. In the love of God's heart. This is best of all. (J. Dobie, D.D.) Yet there is room:—"Grace no more endures a vacuum than nature," says a shrewd commentator on this passage. The fact that there is room is the very strongest invitation; those words on God's lips are the mightiest appeal. 1. There is room in the Saviour's heart. Till that heart is full, till the largest desires

of that love are satisfied, there is not a call only, there is a claim on you to come.

2. There is room in the great Father's home. The Father is the head of the home. Take your own fatherhood, motherhood, sisterhood, or brotherhood, to help you to understand the cry of that Father's heart, "there yet is room." Do not misunderstand the matter. Love may be outraged finally. There may come a point where even the wisest, most patient, most loving father is bound to cut off the son from his family, and extirpate each tender memory from his heart. But He has not cut you off. Your place still waits for you. Sin-sick, wretched one, there yet is room.

3. There is room among the blessed ones on high. Believe that the whole spiritual world throbs in sympathy with the Father and with Christ. Saints and angels, cherubim and seraphim, watch with rapt expectation the issues of a work which cost so much sacrifice, and expends so much love. It is the one theme on high; how heaven is to be filled, filled with the fruits of the Redeemer's travail and the trophies of His grace and love (Rev. vii. 9-12). (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*) *And yet there is room.*—I. FOR WHAT IS THERE ROOM? There is room for the most agreeable and delightful entertainment and improvement of all the faculties of a reasonable and immortal soul in this life, and for its eternal satisfaction, exaltation, and rapture in the next. II. FOR WHOM IS THERE ROOM? There is room for sinners of all nations, wherever the gospel comes. There is room for sinners of all ranks and degrees, and of all characters in the moral, civil, and natural life; for younger and older sinners; for greater and lesser sinners. There is room for such as might be thought of all others the most unlikely, the most miserable, the most unlovely, and the most unworthy, even for the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind, as they are represented in the verse before our text. III. WHERE IS THERE ROOM? And you may take some account of this in the following particulars. 1. There is room in the heart of God. 2. There is room in the provisions of Divine grace. 3. There is room in the encouragements of the gospel. 4. There is room in God's house. IV. HOW IS IT TO BE UNDERSTOOD THAT YET THERE IS ROOM? 1. There still continues to be room. 2. There will not always be room. I. By way of encouragement. If there is still room for all sorts of sinners, you that are yet young, may be assured with advantage that there is room for you. II. By way of caution as to three things. 1. Take heed of every kind of refusal. 2. Take heed of attempting to come in thine own strength. 3. Take heed of expecting to be entertained on account of thine own worthiness, because thou art not so old a sinner as others. (*J. Guyse, D.D.*) *The door of hope yet open.*—I. WHERE there is room, viz.—1. In the mercy of God. 2. In the merits of Christ. 3. As to the efficacy of the Spirit to change the heart. 4. In the covenant of grace. 5. In the household of faith. 6. In the mansions of glory. II. FOR WHOM there is room. In general for all sorts and degrees of men. Particularly—1. For the meanest and most despicable in the world. 2. For the rich. 3. For the afflicted. 4. For such as have long stood out. 5. For backsliders. 6. For the chief sinners. Application: 1. How justly may the gospel be called a joyful sound; and with what thankfulness should it be heard and entertained. How joyful a sound would it be reckoned by the spirits in prison, could it be proclaimed among them with truth, that the door of hope was still open. 2. With what cheerfulness should gospel-ministers address themselves to the work of winning souls upon this ground, that yet there is room: which they may firmly conclude the wisdom and goodness of God will, in the fittest season, fill up. 3. Let none take encouragement from hence to make light of the gospel-invitation, or delay to close with it. Yet there is room, but you know not, as to particular persons, how long or little while it may be so. (*D. Wilcox.*) *Yet there is room.*—I. IN THE CHURCH MILITANT, yet there is room. 1. In the hearts of the faithful preachers of the gospel. They wish well to the souls of their hearers (2 Cor. vi. 11, 12). 2. In those ordinances that are dispensed by the ministers of the gospel. Wisdom's gates are wide enough to receive all that come (Prov. viii. 34). 3. In the virtue of Christ's blood, and riches of God's grace, which is held forth in the ordinances (Rom. v. 20, 21). II. IN THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT, yet there is room. Many mansions (John xiv. 2). There is room enough—1. Objectively: without us. God fully communicates Himself to the saints above (1 Cor. xv. 28). 2. Subjectively: within us. The understanding widened, clearly to know God; the will widened, fully to love God. Conclusion—1. This informs us, that when any who hear the gospel perish, it is not through any scantiness of the gospel-provision, but for want of applying that provision. This also informs us that there is more room than company, more provision than guests, at the gospel feast. Like a fountain, out of which there is more water runs

waste than is used. 2. Though yet there is room, yet we know not how long there may be any room for us. We had need therefore be careful, lest any should seem to come short of it (Heb. iv. 1). 3. Then do not perish in the midst of such plenty: turn not the grace of God into wantonness, as some do to their own destruction; do not transpose or remove it from its ordinary end and use, from gospel ends, so as to cast off obedience to the law of God. (*John Crump.*) *Room at God's feast for all.*—I. THE PROVISION WHICH HAS BEEN PREPARED BY DIVINE MERCY FOR THE WELFARE OF MANKIND. 1. Man is in a state of spiritual want and destitution. 2. It is on this condition of man as a sinner, "without hope in the world," that God looks in mercy, and provides the abundant supplies of His grace. 3. This provision is made in the gospel. (1) The gospel is the means of communicating spiritual truth. (2) Pardon of sin. (3) All spiritual blessings, and the final happiness of heaven. II. THE PROCLAMATIONS ISSUED BY THE DIVINE COMMAND TO BRING MANKIND TO A PARTICIPATION OF THE BLESSINGS PROVIDED. Those persons who are sent out by God must make it the object of their anxiety—1. To give an accurate statement of the nature of the gospel provision as it really exists. 2. To deliver the message in the spirit, and to the extent demanded by the spirit and extent of the gospel itself. III. THE AMPLITUDE OF ACCOMMODATION BY WHICH THE PROVISIONS OF THE GOSPEL ARE DISTINGUISHED—"Yet there is room." And from whence does this amplitude arise? From the infinite merit of the atonement of the Son of God. 1. What effect should this produce on the mind of a minister? The effect should be powerful. There is an amazing provision made, and all people and all nations may come and partake; then am I a minister; let me place no limits to my invitations; wherever I find men, let me tell them how they may be saved. 2. This view of the subject ought to have powerful effects on the minds of penitents; on those who are sorrowful, being convinced of sin. 3. This view of the amplitude of the gospel should enkindle our hopes for its universal propagation. (*James Parsons.*) *Yet there is room.*—1. WHERE there is room. 1. At the feast of the gospel. 2. In the grave. 3. In heaven. 4. In hell. II. WHAT there is room for. 1. Repentance. 2. Prayer. 3. Faith. 4. Holiness. III. FOR WHOM there is room yet. 1. Those who have lost early impressions. 2. Those who still delay to come to Christ. 3. All. (*Mark Cooper, M.A.*) *Room enough in the gospel.*—On one of the hottest days of a sultry July, two of us, weary and worn from a long and dusty tramp along the Portsmouth road, reached at length the top of Hindhead. Not a tree or a shrub within hail, and the sun pouring down remorselessly a flood of fire, there was no sign of shadow except from a large stone cross which garnished Hindhead's summit. That cross was elaborately adorned with Latin inscriptions, and in form was accurate and classical; but its shadow was too narrow to furnish perfect shade even for one, much less for two. The shadow was most refreshing, but there was not enough of it, and one traveller must, parched as he was, stand or lie down beneath Sol's blazing beams, for there was no room for him within the cooling shade. Thus may it be with the gospel of Jesus as set forth by some ministries. Jesus is eloquently talked of, but the freeness of His grace and the abundant power of His blood are not enforced; or it may be systematic theology is the preacher's idol, and Christ is narrowed down to the creed; accuracy of doctrine is fostered, but the Christ who is set forth has no breadth of love, no vastness of shade for the refreshment of weary sinners. At the same time too many take away the solid character of the atonement altogether, and, while aiming at breadth, give us instead of a granite cross a mere gauze with no shade at all. The true scriptural idea of the atonement is "The shadow of a great rock in a weary land." The motto of the gospel of Jesus is, "And yet there is room." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Compel them to come in.*—I. SINNERS NATURALLY ARE OUT. II. It is the great errand of the friends of the bridegroom to BRING THEM IN THAT ARE OUT. III. SINNERS MAY COME IN. IV. SINNERS ARE DESIRED TO COME IN. Will ye then refuse? V. SINNERS MUST COME IN. Compel them to come in. VI. SINNERS SHALL COME IN. (*T. Boston, D.D.*) *Compel them to come in.*—I. First, I must FIND YOU OUT. Yes, I see you this morning, you that are poor. I am to compel you to come in. You are poor in circumstances, but this is no barrier to the kingdom of heaven, for God hath not exempted from His grace the man that shivers in rags, and who is destitute of bread. But especially I must speak to you who are poor, spiritually. You have no faith, you have no virtue, you have no good work, you have no grace, and what is poverty worse still, you have no hope. Ah, my Master has sent you a gracious invitation. And now I see you again. You are not only poor, but you are maimed. There was a time when you thought you

could work out your own salvation without God's help, when you could perform good works, attend to ceremonies, and get to heaven by yourselves; but now you are maimed, the sword of the law has cut off your hands, and now you can work no longer. You have lost all power now to obey the law; you feel that when you would do good, evil is present with you. You feel that you are utterly undone, powerless in every respect to do anything that can be pleasing to God. There is yet another class. You are halt. You are halting between two opinions. You are sometimes seriously inclined, and at another time worldly gaiety calls you away. And yet I see another class—the blind. Yes, you that cannot see yourselves, that think yourselves good when you are full of evil, that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness; to you am I sent. Now, I pause after having described the character, I pause to look at the herculean labour that lies before me. Well did Melancthon say, "Old Adam was too strong for young Melancthon." As well might a little child seek to compel a Samson, as I seek to lead a sinner to the Cross of Christ. If God saith Do it, if I attempt it in faith it shall be done; and if with a groaning, struggling, and weeping heart, I so seek this day to compel sinners to come to Christ, the sweet compulsions of the Holy Spirit shall go with every word, and some indeed shall be compelled to come in. II. And now to the work—directly to the work. Unconverted, unreconciled, unregenerate men and women. I am to COMPEL YOU TO COME IN. Permit me first of all to accost you in the highways of sin and tell you over again my errand. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Gospel compulsion:—1. Be entreated to come in by the consideration of your naturally miserable and perishing condition. 2. Be entreated to come in by the consideration that "all things are ready." 3. Be entreated to come in by the consideration that already many excellent and honourable guests have entered. 4. Be entreated to come in to this feast by the consideration that "yet there is room." 5. Be entreated, therefore, finally, to come in by the consideration that if you reject the invitation to the feast of gospel grace here, you shall be excluded from the feast of heavenly glory hereafter. (Jas. Foote, M.A.)

The urgent invitation:—I. THE FREEDOM OF THE GOSPEL. "Highways": every class invited. II. THE FULNESS—"All things ready." III. THE BANQUET IS THE PROVISION OF LOVE AND THE EXPRESSION OF LOVE. "Compel" means, use strong persuasion. No principle is so urgent as love. It reasons with the soul. IV. GOD, IN SENDING OUT HIS INVITATIONS, BACKS THEM WITH THE AUTHORITY OF FATHERHOOD. V. THE DOOM OF THOSE WHO REFUSE TO ACCEPT. The door is shut as effectually through your neglect as through your refusal. VI. PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS. 1. God constrains souls to come to Him by a great many methods. Prosperity, trials, &c. 2. Hunger ought to send to that feast—soul hunger. 3. It is the duty of Christ's people to make the religion of Christ attractive. An invitation to a cold, cheerless house, would not win even a beggar. 4. The refusal of Christ's invitation is a terrible insult and injury. 5. The time to accept is very short. Come. The banquet waits. (T. L. Cuyler, D.D.)

Kind compulsion:—"Now," said the great man of the feast, "I will not be defeated in this matter; I have with an honest purpose provided a banquet, and there are scores of people who would like to come if they were only invited." We must take care how we give the invitation. My Christian friends, I think sometimes we have just gone opposite to Christ's command, and we have compelled people to stay out. Sometimes our elaborated instructions have been the hindrance. We graduate from our theological seminaries on stilts, and it takes five or six years before we can come down and stand right beside the great masses of the people, learning their joys, sorrows, victories, defeats. We get our heads so brimful of theological wisdom that we have to stand very straight lest they spill over. Now, what do the great masses of the people care about the technicalities of religion? When a man is drowning he does not want you to stand by the dock and describe the nature of the water into which he has fallen, and tell him there are two parts hydrogen gas and one of oxygen gas, with a common density of thirty-nine Fahrenheit, turning to steam under a common atmospheric pressure of two hundred and twelve. He does not want a chemical lecture on water, he wants a rope. Oh, my friends, the paralysis of God on the Church, it seems to me, in this day, is metaphysics. We speak in an unknown tongue in our Sabbath schools, and in our religious assemblages, and in our pulpits, and how can people be saved unless they can understand us? Oh, for the simplicity of Christ in all our instructions—the simplicity. I think often in our religious instructions we compel the people to stay out by our Church architecture. People come in and they find things angular, and cold, and

stiff, and they go away, never again to come; when the Church ought to be a great home-circle, everybody having a hymn-book, giving half to the one next him, every one who has a hand to shake hands, shaking hands—the Church architecture and the Church surroundings saying to the people, “Come in and be at home.” Instead of that, I think all these surroundings often compel the people to stay out. I read of a minister of the gospel who was very fond of climbing among the Swiss mountains. One day he was climbing among very dangerous places, and thought himself all alone when he heard a voice beneath him say, “Father, look out for the safe path, I am following,” and he looked back and saw that he was climbing not only for himself, but climbing for his boy. Oh, let us be sure and take the safe path! Our children are following, our partners in business are following, our neighbours are following, a great multitude stepping right on in our steps. Oh! be sure and take the right path! Exhibit a Christian example, and so, by your godly walk, compel the people to come in. I think there is work also in the way of kindly admonition. I do not believe there is a person in this house to-day who, if approached in a kindly and brotherly manner, would refuse to listen. If you are rebuffed, it is because you lack in tact and common-sense. A Christian physician who is a friend of mine, one day became very anxious about the salvation of a brother physician, and so he left his office, went down to this man’s office, and said, “Is the doctor in?” “No,” replied the young man waiting; “the doctor is not in.” “Well,” said the physician, “when he comes in tell him I called, and give him my Christian love.” This worldly doctor came home after a while, and the message was given to him, and he said within himself, “What does he mean by leaving his Christian love for me?” And he became very much awakened and stirred in spirit, and he said after a while, “Why, that man must mean my soul.” And he went into his office, knelt down, and then took his hat and went out to the office of this Christian physician, and said, “What must I do to be saved?” and the two doctors knelt in the office and commended their souls to God. All the means used in that case was only the voice of one good man, saying, “Give my love to the doctor.” The voice of kindly admonition. Have you uttered it to-day? Compel them to come in. I think there is a great work also to be done in the way of prayer. If we had faith enough to-day, we could go before God and ask for the salvation of all the people here assembled, and they would all be saved, here and now, without a single exception. At the close of a religious service, and when the people had nearly all left the building, a pastor saw a little girl with her head bowed on the back of the pew, and, passing down the aisle, he said to himself, “The little child has fallen asleep.” So he tapped her on the shoulder and said, “The service is over.” She said, “I know it is over; I am praying, sir, I am praying, sir, I am praying.” “Well,” said the minister, “Whatsoever ye ask of God, believing, ye will receive.” She said, “Is that in the Bible?” “Yes,” he said, “there is a promise of that kind in the Bible.” “Well,” she said, “let me see it.” So he turned over the Bible until he came to the promise, and she said, “That’s so, is it? Now, O Lord, bring my father here to-night.” While she was praying her father passed into the door of the church, and came down by his child and said, “What do you want of me?” When that child had begun to pray one hour before for her father, he was three miles away; but by some strange impulse that he could not understand, he hastened to the church, and there the twain knelt, the father’s arm around the child’s neck, the child’s arm around the father’s neck, and there he entered on the road to heaven. “Whatsoever ye ask of God, believing, ye will receive.” That was an answer to the child’s prayer. What did she do? She compelled him to come in. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *The compulsion of love*:—What is the sense of the word “compel”? It is quite vain for us to seek the sense of a word unless we have sense in ourselves. “Compel”! Did not Stephen compel those to whom he spoke to listen? He could not so far tame their ferocity that they should cast away the stones upon the ground, and spare him; but they could not resist the power of the Spirit with which he spoke. There is always some compulsory force in wisdom and in spirit, and how much is there in love! But observe, the guests first of all invited were not compelled to come in; he sent his servants to say, “All things are ready.” “They may be,” said these distinguished people, “but we are not.” He did not send his servants to compel *them* to come in; no, in his anger he “let them alone.” “Compel them to come in” is spoken of the outcast—the necessitous—those that are beyond the very circle of the city, and not merely in its lowest places. “Compel,” as spoken of these, hints at once

to us that persuasiveness and urgency are necessary to effect conversion, and also that most potent means of conversion will be found stored up in the gospel as we go onwards, and try to conquer the world. Therefore, this word "compel" is like a promise given by God. Of course, there is nothing here against human liberty. It is the happiest way of being overcome, to be persuaded that somebody loves us, and so made to go, in willing captivity, to receive his love. (*T. T. Lynch.*) *Compel them to come in*:—There are three ways of compelling men to come in, that is, of bringing persons over to our communion, and to our opinion, in matters of religion. The first is, by ill usage and persecution, the unlawfulness of which I propose to show. The second is, by persuasion, instruction, and conviction. The third way is of an ambiguous kind, which it seems difficult to appraise; for it is neither so good as to deserve to be cried up for a virtue, nor yet so bad as to be condemned for a vice. It is overcoming men by kindness and courtesies, alluring and proselyting them by favours, honours, profits, gifts, and rewards. Now let us consider the vile nature and the pernicious effects of persecution. 1. It is not a probable way to make men good. If we would serve God in an acceptable manner, it is requisite that we know the will of God, and that we pay Him a cheerful obedience. 2. Persecution will probably make men more wicked than they were, whilst they lived in error unmolested. 3. Persecution is contrary to the spirit of Christianity. The religion of our Saviour is a religion like its Author, full of humanity, lenity, and universal benevolence. 4. The consequence of supposing persecution to be recommended by the gospel, is, that all sects of Christians would have the same call to plague and destroy those who differ from them. All sects of Christians are the true Church in their own opinion, and would apply such a commission to themselves, as their right, or their duty. 5. It is very strange that Christians in these latter ages can find the doctrine of persecution so plainly laid down in the New Testament, when the first Christians could see no such thing there. But let us not altogether pass over their more plausible arguments. 1. They tell us that it is good to punish men who are in error, to make them bethink themselves, to put them upon an examination of facts and reasons, which else they would not have considered. 2. Persecutors frequently object, that, by permitting liberty of conscience, encouragement is given to scurrility and profaneness. 3. Persecutors object also, that by such indulgence heresies are propagated to the eternal destruction of those who are deluded, and that therefore the utmost rigour is true Christian charity, and, by the punishment of a few, saves many from everlasting misery. 4. Another argument of which persecutors make great use, is taken from the laws which God gave to the Jews, by which idolaters and false prophets were to be put to death; and from the practice of those kings of Israel and Judah who put these laws in execution. Divine wisdom alone can authorize them, and not public wisdom, as some mightily love to call it, which is too often public folly. (*J. Jortin, D.D.*) *Against persecution for religion*:—I. Our Saviour, in this parable, compares the kingdom of heaven to a king making a marriage-feast for his son. It is evident that when our Lord, in the text, bids the preachers of His gospel go into the highways and hedges and compel men to come in, His meaning is not, Compel them by force of arms; but, Compel them by irresistible clearness of reason, by strength of argument, and affectionate admonition; convince, persuade, entreat them; set before them the certainty of a future judgment, the promises and the threatenings of the Lord; prevail with them by your own good example; urge, press, inculcate upon them the necessity of religion (2 Tim. iv. 2). II. To show to what a wicked sense they have sometimes been perverted by men of corrupt and ambitious minds. Compel them to come in: that is (in *their* explication), compel them by violence and force of arms, by racks and tortures, by dragoons and inquisitions, by fire and sword. As if religion, whose great end is peace and love, the universal reconciliation of men to God and to each other, could itself be propagated by the highest oppressions, and most inhuman cruelties; and be made to authorize and to sanctify such practices, the preventing whereof is indeed the very chief design of all religion both natural and revealed. But to be more particular. 1. It is originally, in the very nature of things, inconsistent and absurd to think that a right sense of religion can be put into men's minds by force of arms. For what is religion but such a persuasion of mind towards God as produces obedience to His commands; arising from a due sense of Him in the understanding, a just fear and love of Him in the affections, and a choice or preference of virtue in the will? Now to attempt to influence the will by force, is like applying sounds to the eyes in order to be seen, or colours to the ears in order to be heard. 2. As force is inconsistent

with the nature of religion in general, so is it much more opposite to the spirit of Christianity in particular. 3. As force is inconsistent with the nature of religion in general, and still more opposite to the spirit of Christianity in particular; so it is in Scripture still further made the distinguishing character of the great apostasy foretold by Christ and His apostles. (*S. Clarke, D.D.*) *Anxious constraint*:—A young man, deeply concerned for the conversion of his brother, while listening to a discourse addressed by me to the young, was strongly possessed with the idea that if he could obtain permission to publish it, his brother, who was a compositor in a printing-office, might be led to read it first for the press, and afterwards for publication, and thereby the subject might arrest his attention, and impress him with its truth and importance. The success was even beyond his expectation, and he lived to see that brother united to the Church of which he himself was a member, and also employed in missionary labours, in which he has now been successfully engaged for many years. (*J. Leifchild, D.D.*) *Earnestness in seeking to save*:—Simeon was once summoned to the death-bed of a dying brother. Entering the room, the relative extended his hand, and with emotion said: "I am dying, and you never warned me of the state in which I was, and of the great danger I was in of neglecting my soul." "Nay, my brother," said Simeon, "but I took every reasonable opportunity of bringing the subject of religion before you, and frequently alluded to it in my letters." "Yes," said the dying man, "but you never came to me, closed the door, took me by the collar of my coat, and told me that I was unconverted, and that if I died in that state I should be lost; and now I am dying, and, but for God's grace, I might have been for ever undone." It is said that Simeon never forgot the scene. (*Handbook to Scripture Doctrines.*) *No provision made for defeat*:—It is a remarkable thing in this parable, that Christ makes no provision for defeat. He does not say what we are to do if they refuse to come in. He takes it for granted that we must overcome if we are in earnest. It used to be said of the Duke of Wellington, that it was a characteristic of his career that in the orders which he issued to his brigadiers he never made any provision for defeat. He said, "Go and capture that hill from the French," or, "Go and drive the enemy from that house"; and he never told them what to do if they failed. It was their business to do it, and he never made any provision for defeat; and they did succeed. So, too, Christ makes no provision for defeat. He assumes that we shall not fail. Cheerful, audacious, Christian work cannot fail. It was said by a great Latin historian of Alexander the Great, that the secret of his marvellous victories, by which the world was brought to his feet was this: he wisely dared to think nothing of imaginary dangers! All sorts of reports reached him with respect to the difficulties of invading Asia, and so forth, but he put them all on one side. Oh, that we may be filled with the same glorious spirit—that we may think nothing of imaginary dangers! The devil is always ready to exhibit a few ghosts of difficulties to terrify weak saints. Let us despise the ghosts; there is nothing in them. We cannot fail if our heart is full of love to God, and of sympathy with our fellow Christians. The only real hindrance to the progress of the gospel is unbelief, in the form of downright selfishness. (*H. P. Hughes, M.A.*)

Vers. 25, 26. If any man come to Me, and hate not, &c.—The statute-law of discipleship:—I. THE NATURE OF THIS NECESSARY QUALIFICATION OF A TRUE DISCIPLE OF CHRIST. 1. An esteem of Christ above all. 2. The heart renounces its property in all things of the world, in the day of its closing with Jesus Christ. 3. The soul resigns all to the Lord; lays down all at His feet, to be disposed of as He will. 4. The soul accepts of Christ for, and instead of the things resigned. 5. The soul is disposed to part with them, when the Lord calls for them; has an habitual readiness to part with them for Christ. 6. There is in the soul a new power of living, without them, on Jesus Christ; a life which is an absolute mystery to every Christless soul (*John vi. 57*). We now proceed—II. To confirm the doctrine of the text, or show, that no man can be a true disciple of Christ, to whom Christ is not dearer than what is dearest to Him in the world. For this purpose, consider—1. That the soul cannot truly lay hold on Christ, but it must of necessity part with the world—"No man can serve two masters" (*Matt. vi. 24*). 2. It is impossible that the love of God, and the love of the world (the persons and things of the world), can at the same time be predominant in the heart. One of them must of necessity be uppermost. 3. That if Christ be not dearer to us than the world, there is no universal resignation, which is necessary to prove the sincerity of the heart. 4. That if Christ is not loved supremely, there is a root wanting, the fruit

of which is necessary to evidence sincerity. Because of the deceitfulness of your heart, it will be good to be very distinct and particular in this point, on which eternity depends. In consequence I would advise you—(1) To give up with all your lusts. You have held the grip long, let it now go—"Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" (Hos. xiv. 8). (2) To lay down at the Lord's feet your nearest and dearest relations, so as that you may never break with Christ for them: His favour, truths, and ways, must be dearer to you than they. And sure I am, if thou meetest with Christ at His table, thou wilt say, "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh." (3) Lay down at the Lord's feet your substance in the world, be it great or small, houses and lands, goods, &c., that He may dispose of them as He may see meet. (4) Lay down at the Lord's feet your credit and esteem in the world. This is often a great idol, and goes betwixt many a man and Christ. (5) Lay down at the Lord's feet your ease and liberty (Acts xxi. 13). (6) Lay down at Christ's feet your desires. Your desires shall be to your spiritual Husband, who shall choose for you your inheritance (Psa. xlvii. 4). (7) Lay down at the Lord's feet your life. Let your bodies be given now to the Lord, not only for service, but also for a sacrifice, if He requires it. I now proceed

—III. To offer some reasons why Christ is dearer to His true disciples than what is dearest to them in the world. Among other reasons the following are mentioned.

1. Because to every true disciple, sin, of all bitter things, is the bitterest. 2. That God is man's chief end; and when He made him, He made him pointing towards Himself as His chief end (Eccl. vii. 29). 3. That as there unquestionably is, so they have seen, a vanity and emptiness in all things of the world, even the things that are dearest to them (Psa. cxix. 96). 4. Because they find Christ of all objects the most suitable to them, and therefore He cannot but be dearer to them than the dearest thing in the world. 5. Because He is their greatest benefactor; His unparalleled benefits command their hearts to be all His: He has done for them what none other could do. 6. Because they are sensible that whatever they have in the world, they have it through and by Him. And so they behold Him as the fountain of all their mercies. Thus—(1) They have the enjoyment of their blessings through Him. (2) They have the comfort of them through Him. 7. Because, if it were not so, Christ would have no Church in the world. If imprisoning, banishing, spoiling of goods, fields and scaffolds reeking with the blood of the saints, would have deterred all persons from following Christ, there had been no Church in the world this day. But God will have a Church in spite of devils and wicked men. (*T. Boston, D.D.*) *Christ worthy of our highest esteem:—I.*

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE LOVE HERE SPOKEN OF. 1. An esteem and valuation of Christ above all worldly enjoyments whatsoever. 2. A choosing Him before all other enjoyments. 3. Love to Christ implies service and obedience to Him; the same love that when it is between equals is friendship, when it is from an inferior to a superior is obedience. Love, of all the affections, is the most active; hence by those who express the nature of things by hieroglyphics, we have it compared to fire, certainly for nothing more than its activity. The same arms that embrace a friend, will be as ready to act for Him. 4. Love to Christ implies an acting for Him in opposition to all other things; and this is the undeceiving, infallible test of a true affection. 5. Love to Christ imports a full acquiescence in Him alone, even in the absence and want of all other felicities: men can embrace Christ with riches, Christ with honour, Christ with interest, and abundantly satisfy themselves in so doing; though perhaps all the time they put but a cheat upon themselves, thinking that they follow Christ, while indeed they run only after the loaves. II. THE REASONS AND MOTIVES THAT MAY INDUCE US TO THIS LOVE. 1. That He is best able to reward our love. 2. That He has shown the greatest love to us. III. THE SIGNS, MARKS, AND CHARACTERS WHEREBY WE MAY DISCERN IT. 1. A frequent and indeed a continual thinking of Him. "Where your treasure is," says our Saviour, "there will your heart be also." That is, whatsoever you love and value, that will be sure to take up your thoughts. 2. The second sign of a sincere love to Christ, is a willingness to leave the world, whensoever God shall think fit to send His messenger of death to summon us to a nearer converse with Christ. "I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ," says St. Paul. 3. A third, and indeed the principal sign of a sincere love to Christ, is a zeal for His honour, and an impatience to hear or see any indignity offered Him. A person truly pious will mourn for other men's sins, as well as for his own. (*R. South, D.D.*) *Loving Christ above all, the character of His true disciples:—I.* Let us consider WHAT IT IS

TO BE WORTHY OF CHRIST. And this we find is very well explained in the passage

just now referred to by this expression, "he cannot be My disciple"; that is, he cannot be a sincere Christian; he may call himself by that name. II. To consider THE LOVE OF CHRIST AS IN COMPARISON WITH, AND OPPOSITION TO THE LOVE OF FRIENDS, and all other worldly interests. Such affections have deep and firm foundation in nature and reason. As this may be justly attributed to God as its Author, and His wisdom and goodness shine in it, religion is not intended to root it out, or in any degree to weaken the bonds of humanity. But the immediate ends of these natural relations are not the highest ends of our being. We are capable of nobler pursuits and higher enjoyments than the ease and conveniences of our present condition. It is the predominant affection which constitutes the character and temper of a man. The covetous is he in whom the love of wealth prevails over all other inclinations; the ambitious, in whom the love of honour; the voluptuous, in whom the love of sensual pleasures. Each of these will sacrifice every other interest to his idol, and every other desire, which is even natural to him, yet not so strong. But to preserve an universal harmony in the mind of man, and to constitute a truly religious and virtuous character, the love of God and of goodness ought to be predominant. Other affections are not to be rooted out, but this must be supreme; and they gratified and indulged only by its permission, and so far as not to be inconsistent with it. This is the true meaning of my text. For what I would principally observe for illustrating this subject is, that the love of Christ, and the love of God and goodness, is just the same. And as moral excellence is the inseparable character of the Deity, so it is absurd to pretend that we love Him without loving it; that we love the holiest and best of all Beings without loving holiness and goodness itself. Again, let us consider that to be worthy of Christ, to be His true disciples, and obtain His acceptance, it is absolutely necessary that we should adhere to Him inviolably, that we should hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, and be stedfast and immovable in good works. For they only who endure to the end shall be saved, and to them alone who remain faithful unto death, the crown of life is promised. Now, the only possible security of this stedfastness, is love to Christ, and to religion and virtue above all. I shall only add that a stedfast and universal obedience to Him is imported in our being worthy of Christ, or His sincere disciples. It remains now that we make some application of this subject; which may be the better done, because our Saviour Himself has gone before us in applying it to one of the highest and most difficult points in the practice of religion, that is, to the case of suffering persecution. For can there be any sincere affection to God, to our Saviour, and to His cause of pure religion and virtue, if it be not a prevailing affection, stronger than any other, which opposes it in the heart? But, we may apply this also to other and more ordinary purposes in the practice of religion. If the commanding love of Christ be a sufficient defence against the strongest temptations, it may well support the mind against lesser ones. Our affection to our friends and worldly interests may mislead us by flattery as well as terror: and their insinuating smiles may prove a snare as well as their frowns. Besides this, there are other temptations which derive their force from the same root, the love of our intimate friends; and are only defeated by the same principle, a superior affection to Christ. There is nothing more common in the world than for men's families to be snares to them; while to make a large, or (as they pretend) a competent provision for them, they violate their consciences, and sin against God, either by direct injustice, or, at least, by such immoderate solicitude and incessant toil as is inconsistent with piety, leaving no room for the exercises of it; or by such narrowness, and withholding more than is meet, as is directly contrary to charity. But let us remember that this is to render ourselves unworthy of Christ, by loving sons or daughters, or other worldly interests more than Him. Besides, distresses befalling our friends, their deaths and misfortunes, which, considering the vicissitude of human affairs, are always to be expected, and they are to some minds, at least, among the most sensibly affecting trials in life; these are to be supported on the same principle. (*J. Abernethy, M.A.*) *Love for Christ greater than love for a sister*:—There is a beautiful story, which some of you will probably know, as it forms the groundwork of one of the best tales of modern times, and which affords a noble example of what I have just been saying. The daughter of a poor Scotch farmer—her name was Helen Walker—after her father's death, supported her mother by her unceasing labour, and by submitting to every privation. She had a sister, many years younger, whom she brought up and educated, and loved as her own child. This sister, however, brought great grief and shame upon her. She fell into foul sin. She was delivered of a child. The

child was found dead. The mother was tried for child-murder. This trial was a terrible one for poor Helen. Notwithstanding her sister's sin, she could not forget how she had loved her; she could not cast her out of her heart: she longed that her sister's life should be spared, so that she might have time to repent. A fearful temptation assailed her. It seemed as though her sister's life hung upon her word—a single falsehood might save her. If she would but say that her sister had made any preparations for the birth of the child, or had ever mentioned it to her, her sister would be acquitted. Her sister implored her; her love for her sister rent her heart; but Helen said, It is impossible for me to swear to a falsehood. Whatever betide, I must speak the truth. Thus the sister was condemned to death; and the thoughtless looked upon Helen as hardhearted. But she had shown that she loved God above her sister. She now showed how deeply she loved her sister, with a love far deeper than it would have been, had she attempted to save her sister's life. She resolved to take up a petition herself to the King, to spare her sister's life. She walked to London barefoot, a journey of above four hundred miles; such a journey in those days, a hundred years ago, being far more difficult and dangerous than it is now; and though she was only a poor, helpless peasant, such was the energy and boldness with which her love inspired her, that she gained the King's pardon, carried it back on foot, and arrived just in time to save her sister's life. I have told you this story, because it is such a beautiful example of the right proportion between love and duty, whereby both are greatly strengthened—of the right proportion between our love to God and our love to our earthly friends. It is an example too, which if we kept it in mind, might often help to admonish us of our duty. For the temptation which Helen Walker resisted is a very common one, and comes across us in a number of shapes. We are often tempted to do something that is not quite right, to say something that is not strictly true, for the advantage, as we deem it, of those whom we love; and because our love is feeble and shallow, and shrinks from pain and sacrifices, we yield to the temptation. Sometimes the temptation may be very strong. You, who are fathers, may see your wives and children suffering from want. At such a time evil thoughts will rise up; you will think you may do anything to save your wife and children from starving. So you may, and ought to do everything, everything in your power, and even beyond your power, provided it be not against the law of God. Whatever is, you should shrink from, remembering our Lord's words, that, unless you love Him above wife and child, you cannot be worthy of Him. (*J. C. Hare, M.A.*) *Love of Christ greater than love of relatives*:—While discussing this passage one day, I noticed that a beam of sunlight had fallen upon the mass of glowing coal in the grate, and where the sunlight fell the bright redness was turned into absolute blackness. "Ah!" thought I, "there is the meaning of this passage." As the glowing coal appears black beneath the far more intense light of the sun, so Christ asks that the light of our love for Him should be so intense as to render our earthly loves even as hatreds in comparison. In reality, although the red coal appears black under the sunlight, it is still as hot as before, yea, hotter than before, because of the added heat from the sun; so our love for friends and relatives, though it should appear as hatred beneath our love for Christ, will not be quenched by it, but added to, and rendered deeper and purer. (*H. Stanley.*) *Christ demanding hatred*:—The word "hate" is a strong word, and I believe that it points both to strong feeling and strong action. The words "hate his own life also" are the key to the whole aphorism. A disciple is to hate his relatives and friends in the same sense in which he is to hate himself. In what sense, then, can a man hate himself? He can hate what is mean and base in himself. He can hate his own selfish life. To cling to life is natural; to desire ease and comfort is natural; to gratify the appetites is natural; but all this natural life, whenever it comes into collision with the spiritual side of our being, may be even hated. It is not merely that the Christian may, after a struggle, prefer to remain true to God and Christ, rather than gratify the selfish cravings of his own natural life; he may positively hate these selfish cravings when they are tempting him to forsake his duty. The word may be paradoxical; but is it too strong? Have we never felt disgusted at our own selfishness? Have we never experienced a strong revulsion of feeling when we have been tempted by "our own life"—by our natural liking for what is agreeable to that life—to shirk our duty, and to do something mean and base? In the old Greek drama, Admetos is disgusted with the life which, in selfish cowardice, he has purchased by the sacrifice of his wife Alkestis. And we can well conceive that many a Christian martyr may have felt disgusted with his own life, when he was tempted to preserve it at the

cost of denying his Lord. It is thus, then, that a man may hate himself. Not in the bald, literal sense ; for he still cares for his own true best life, and wishes that to be developed and strengthened. But he does, in a sense, hate himself when the self in him rises in rebellion against God and Christ and duty. Now, in this sense also, a man may hate his relatives and friends. He may hate that in them which is mean and base. He may hate that in them which seeks to drag him away from Christ. (T. C. Finlayson.)

Ver. 27. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, &c.—On taking up the cross :—*Christiani sunt cruciani*, says Luther, Christians are cross-bearers. It is in their hearts to bear the cross, whatever it be, whensoever Christ shall require it ; and they do actually bear it whenever they are called to it. They do not flinch from it, nor decline it, nor turn from it, by any indirect or unlawful course. I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE CROSS. 1. The cross includes loss and damage, the greatest losses as well as the least ; the loss of all outward things, as well as the loss of any. When Christ was nailed to the cross, He was bereaved of all, and fastened to it naked ; He had not so much as His garments left ; they who brought Him to the cross divided these amongst them. He that is not willing to part with all, to follow Christ, when he cannot fully and faithfully follow Him without quitting all, he is not worthy of Him, unworthy the name of a Christian. 2. It speaks shame and reproach. It was *servile supplicium*, a base ignominious suffering, to which none were exposed but the vilest of men. It was a suffering proper to slaves and fugitives ; there was not the meanest freeman amongst the Romans but was above it. Hence shame and the cross are joined together (Heb. xii. 2). Hence that expression, "bearing His reproach" (Heb. xiii. 13), i.e., bearing the cross. No coming to Christ but in this posture, when the Lord calls to it. 3. It imports pain and torture. The cross was a most grievous and painful suffering. Ausonius calls it *pæne extremum*, the extremity of torture. And Cicero, *crudelissimum teterrimumque supplicium*, the most cruel and horrid suffering. When Ignatius was going to be exposed to the fury of wild beasts for the name of Christ, he cries, "Now I begin to be a disciple." 4. It imports death itself. The cross was *ultimum supplicium*, the last thing that could be suffered. Cruelty was herein terminated, and could go no further, at least to the sense of the sufferer. It was the worst kind of death. II. WHAT IT IS TO BEAR THE CROSS. 1. You must make account of it. Calculate what it will cost you. 2. A resolution to bear the cross, whatever it be, how heavy, or grievous, or tedious soever it may prove ; a firm, and hearty, and settled resolution to bear it, is a virtual bearing of it beforehand (ver. 33). 3. You must be always ready for the cross, always preparing for it, whether it seem near, or whether it seem further off. One paraphraseth the words thus, "Whosoever doth not come to Me with a preparation of mind to suffer anything rather than part with Me, he is not for My turn." This is to bear the cross daily, as Christ requires (Luke ix.). Though every day do not afford a cross, yet every day we bear the cross by daily preparing for it (1 Cor. xv. 31). Even when the cross seems far off, much more when it is in view, you must be preparing for it, if you be Christians indeed ; and the Lord will take your readiness to bear it for a bearing of it, when He sees good to prevent it. 4. It speaks actual undergoing it when it is laid on us. But when the Lord brings it to us, we must actually take it up. He is no disciple for Christ that will not do it. III. THE MANNER OF BEARING THE CROSS. 1. A Christian endeavours to bear the cross patiently. That while the cross oppresses his outward man, he may possess his soul in patience. Not the patience of the Stoics, a senseless stupidity ; nor the patience of the heathen, a mere yielding to necessity ; but a due sense of the pressure, with a quiet submission to the hand of God, whoever be the instrument, without murmuring, repining, disquietment, or despondency. 2. He endeavours to bear it cheerfully. That which is bearing the cross here is taking up the cross (chap. ix.). Christ bore His cross willingly ; Simon of Cyrene was compelled to bear that cross. Christ would have us come after Him, bear it as He did. It should not be a forced, but a voluntary act. 3. He endeavours to bear it fruitfully. The cross is dry wood, and so was Aaron's rod ; but as that blossomed, so does this bring forth fruit, when improved (Heb. xii. 11). This puts the followers of Christ upon seeking the sweet fruits of peace and holiness in the bowels of devouring calamities ; to get spiritual gain and advantage by outward loss ; to grow richer unto God by worldly impoverishment ; to converse more with God when separated from friends and relations ; to value more the love of Christ when they smart by the world's hatred ; to partake more of holiness when he partakes less of

the ease, peace, plenty of the world ; to make use of the cross for the crucifying of the flesh ; to make sin more hateful and dreadful, the conscience more tender, the world less tempting, more contemptible, grace more active and lively, the word more sweet and effectual, prayer more fervent and affectionate, the appearing of Christ more lovely and desirable, the conversation more heavenly. To bear the cross as a disciple of Christ, is to bring forth more fruit in bearing of it. (*D. Clarkson, B.D.*)

*The Christian's cross:—*I. THE CROSS IS ORDINARILY THE LOT OF CHRISTIANS. Persecution and troubles have always attended the people of God. And the reasons of it are evident. 1. The malice of Satan, who knowing himself to be cast off by God, he hates God with an implacable hatred ; and since the Lord is above the reach of his malice, he falls upon those who are dearest to Him, the people of God. 2. The enmity of the world. The world would be sure to cross, to afflict and persecute what it hates ; and the disciples of Christ are hated by the world (*John xv. 19*). Not only that part of the world which evidently lies in wickedness, but the more refined part of it which dresses up itself in a form of godliness. Those who have no more but the form, hate those that have the power, because this is a real reproof and conviction of the vanity and insufficiency of outward forms, how specious soever ; and that which detects them is hated by them (*1 John v. 19*). 3. There is a necessity of the cross upon a manifold account. (1) To distinguish true disciples from hypocrites and pretenders. When Christ may be professed and followed with ease, and safety, and credit, multitudes will follow Him, every man will profess Him whose hearts are not with Him. But when the cross comes, that makes a distinction. (2) To try His disciples, that He may have an experiment of their affection and faithfulness to Him : " Who is on my side ? Who ? " says *Jehu* (*2 Kings ix. 33*). So says Christ, when He brings out the cross ; let Me now see who is for Me, let Me see who it is that will bear the cross for Me. (3) For the advantage of grace. A Christian is not complete unless he have on his whole armour ; and it is the cross puts us upon putting of it on ; it would lie rusting by us, if we were not roused to the use of it by the frequent approaches of the cross. (4) To take us off from the world. The cross embitters the world to us, and confutes those vain conceits which make us fond of it. The vizard falls off by which it had deluded us, and now we may perceive what an impostor it was, when, for all its fair promises, we meet with nothing but vanity, and enmity, and vexation, and hard usage. And will it not seem lovely ? Or can we doat on it any longer ? The cross lets us not only see, but feel what the world is. (5) To tame the flesh, and keep it under, which otherwise would grow headstrong, and bear down all the restraints of grace, and hurry us into carnal excess—" Every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth it " (*John xv.*). He lops off the luxuriances of natural corruption. And how is this done ? Why, a sharp cross will be effectual to do it, when the Lord takes it into His hand and useth it for this purpose ! (6) To endear heaven to us. The ark was more acceptable to Noah's dove when she found no rest to the soles of her feet on the face of the earth. II. A CHRISTIAN CANNOT ORDINARILY AVOID THE CROSS WITHOUT SINNING AGAINST CHRIST. III. HE THAT WILL ORDINARILY SIN AGAINST CHRIST TO AVOID THE CROSS, CANNOT BE A CHRISTIAN. This being proved, it will appear an evident truth, that he that doth not, will not, bear the cross, is not, cannot be a Christian. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 28-30. For which of you, intending to build a tower.—*The Christian builder.*—Our Lord on purpose mentioned a tower rather than any other building, perhaps to signify that the top of our spiritual building must reach to heaven, or otherwise it will be vain to build. A Christian, then, is a man that builds a tower, a noble building, not a cottage, and therefore should count the cost. I. WHAT SORT OF A TOWER THE CHRISTIAN BUILDS. 1. A tower is no small building, but a noble structure ; and so is the believer's spiritual building. (1) Infinite wisdom is the contriver of it. (2) The Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation of it. 2. It is a noble building, or a famous tower, because the design of it is to preserve the soul from all its enemies, and from all dangers whatsoever, to eternal life. 3. This spiritual building may be called a tower, because a Christian is a soldier, and this building is to be his fortress ; and if he builds on Christ, or rightly upon the only foundation, he need not fear all the gunshot of Satan, sin, the flesh, and the world, though he must expect to be battered severely by these enemies. 4. It may be called a tower, because the Christian builds for another world. He must gradually proceed until he reaches heaven. II. WHY IS A CHRISTIAN SAID TO BUILD THIS TOWER ? 1. Because he is to believe in Jesus Christ, i.e., to build on Him. 2. But note that it is God

who finds all the materials. III. EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD CONSIDER THE MATTER SO WELL AS TO COUNT THE COST. Why? 1. Because it will be a very costly building to him. (1) He must give up all his cursed sins and lusts, though as dear to him in times past as a right hand or eye. (2) He must expect it will cost him the loss of whatsoever he once accounted gain. (3) He must part with all his former companions, and expect they will mock and deride him, and may be his own wife also. 2. Because great storms may rise, and floods come, and beat upon his high tower; and he should count the damage he may sustain in such storms. 3. Because he is not able either to begin, nor to build, or lay one stone by his own strength; and if he knows not this, or does not utterly despair of any power or ability of his own, he will never be able to finish, and then men "will mock him," &c. 4. He must account how rich, how strong, and able he is in Jesus Christ; and if he knows that Christ is his strength, he counts the cost aright; and if he depends wholly, constantly, and believingly upon Jesus Christ, he need not fear but he shall have wherewith to finish this famous tower, *i.e.*, the salvation of his precious soul. Application: 1. This reprehends all rash and inconsiderate persons, who, through some sudden flash of zeal (which may prove like a lava flood) set out in a visible profession of Christ and the gospel. 2. This may inform us of the reason there are so many who grow cold, and soon falter, and fall off, or decline in their zeal and seeming love to Christ, His truth, and people. They counted not the cost—what corruptions they must mortify, what temptations they must withstand, what reproaches they must expect to meet with, what enemies they may find, and what relations they may enrage and stir up against them. 3. Let all from hence be exhorted to count the cost before they begin to build, and not expose themselves by their inconsiderateness to the reproach of men, either to the grief of the godly, or to the contempt and scorn of the wicked. 4. Yet let none from hence be discouraged, or decline closing with Christ, or with His people; for if they are sincere and gracious persons, they will understand that the almighty power of God is engaged to help them. 5. Count also all the external charge, which a visible profession of Christ may expose you to; for the interest of Christ, and the charge of His Church, must be borne. 6. How great is the work of a Christian. No lazy life. 7. Let all learn on what foundation to build, and not refuse the chief cornerstone. Depend wholly upon God in Christ. His money pays for all. Yet you shall not miscarry for want of money to finish, if in all your wants you go to Him by faith and prayer. (*B. Keach.*) *Importance of consideration*:—Nélaton, the great French surgeon, once said that if he had four minutes in which to perform an operation on which a life depended, he would take one minute to consider how best to do it. (*Baxendale's Anecdotes.*) *Purposes should be weighed*:—Before proceeding to any work, we should weigh it. Letters are charged in the post office according to weight. I have written and sealed a letter containing several sheets. I desire that it should pass; I think it will; but I know well that it will not be allowed to pass because I desire that it should or think that it will. I know well it will be tested by imperial weights and measures. Before I plunge it beyond my reach, I place it on a balance before me, not constructed to please my desire, but honestly adjusted to the legal standard. I weigh it there, and check it myself by the very rules which government will apply. So should we weigh our purposes in the balance, before we launch them forth in action. (*W. Arnot.*) *The religious life exceeds human resource*:—He is not, in our Lord's estimation, the true spiritual builder, such as will bring his work to a successful end, who, counting the cost, finds that he has enough, as he supposes to finish the building which he has begun; but the wise and happy builder is he who counts and discovers that he has not enough, that the work far exceeds any resources at his command, and who thereupon forsakes all that he has, all vain imagination of a spiritual wealth of his own; and therefore proceeds to build, not at his own charges at all, but altogether at the charges of God, waiting upon Him day by day for new supplies of strength. (*Archbishop Trench.*) *Counting the cost*:—I. TRUE RELIGION IS COSTLY. A poor man is suddenly made a prince; it will cost him the giving up of his former manners, and will involve him in new duties and cares. A man is set on the road to heaven as a pilgrim: does he pay anything to enter by the wicket-gate? I trow not: free grace admits him to the sacred way. But when that man is put on the road to heaven it will cost him something. It will cost him earnestness to knock at the wicket-gate, and sweat wherewith to climb the Hill Difficulty; it will cost him tears to find his roll again when he has lost it in the arbour of ease: it will cost him great care in

going down the Valley of Humiliation; it will cost him resistance unto blood when he stands foot to foot with Apollyon in conflict. What, then, is the expense? 1. If you would be Christ's, and have His salvation, you must love Him beyond every other person in this world. 2. Self must be hated. I must mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts, denying myself anything and everything which would grieve the Saviour, or would prevent my realizing perfect conformity to Him. 3. If we would follow the Saviour, we must bear our cross. He who has the smile of the ungodly, must look for the frown of God. 4. We must follow Christ, *i.e.*, act as He acted. 5. Unreserved surrender of all to Jesus. If you possess a farthing that is your own and not your master's, Christ is not your master. II. WISDOM SUGGESTS THAT WE SHOULD COUNT THE COST. 1. If you do not count the cost, you will not be able to carry out your resolves. It is a great building, a great war. Faith and repentance are a life-work. 2. To fail in this great enterprise will involve terrible defeat. Half-hearted Christians, half-hearted religious men, may not be scoffed at in the public streets to their faces, but they are common butts of ridicule behind their backs. False professors are universally despised. Oh! if you must be lost, be lost as anything but hypocrites. III. COST WHATEVER IT MAY, TRUE RELIGION IS WORTH THE COST. 1. The present blessings of true religion are worth all the cost. 2. What recompense comes for all cost in the consolation afforded by true godliness in the article of death? 3. Christ asks you to give up nothing that will injure you. 4. Christ does not ask you to do anything that He has not done Himself. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ill-considered beginnings.—This parable stands in juxtaposition with that of the Great Supper, and is plainly designed to supplement its lesson, and preclude any perversion of its meaning. In the one you have the freedom of gospel privileges, in the other you have the costliness of gospel responsibilities. "You that are following me so readily," says the Saviour, "consider what you do. As builders of a spiritual house, are you incurring a new and a serious outlay; are you prepared to face it? As warriors on a spiritual campaign, you are challenging new and uncompromising enemies; are you able to confront them? Far better leave an undertaking alone, than, after starting it, have thereafter to abandon it, especially when, as in the present case, it attracts the observation of so many watchful eyes, and provokes the resentment of so many jealous hearts. Beware lest you waken the world's hostility by your pretensions to strength when you begin, and live to incur its mockery by your confession of weakness when you desist." That, then, is the drift of this passage. Of course, only one side of the truth is here brought before us. It is not only on account of the views of outsiders, their spitefulness when a man commences, and their contempt when he leaves off, that our Saviour bids those who would join Him count the cost. There are other and worse consequences to be faced by him who begins and who ceases in this matter, than the pointing of a worldling's finger or the wagging of a worldling's tongue, and for these we must look elsewhere. But so far as it goes the parable is both pertinent and pungent, the lesson of it plain, the application unavoidable. He that will build a tower necessarily invites attention, provokes scrutiny, sets speculation astir, and these not always of the kindest or most favourable sort. Publicly he succeeds, if success be in store for him; but publicly, too, he must fail. Exactly so is it with the assuming of a Christian position. Let a man bear in mind that for this, if for no other reason, he is wise to think well ere beginning, remembering that the eye of the world is upon him. Not only is this matter of a Christian profession and a spiritual life a necessarily public undertaking; it is also a very costly one. And the higher the ideal we erect for ourselves, the more important and commanding the position we assume, the greater the outlay we must face. True, let me remind you again, the building of the tower may turn out in the end the most gloriously profitable investment that is open to us. When the walls are complete, and the headstone brought forth with shoutings of "grace, grace unto it," it may prove a magnificent and an everlasting habitation, repaying a thousandfold, both in shelter and in splendour, the disbursements its erection occasioned. But, meanwhile, these disbursements may be trying. And let every man weigh the solemn fact, the assuming of a Christian profession and the maintenance of the Christian life may in some cases involve a serious price. Nor will any be able to say that the estimates for the building of the tower have been kept in the background by Scripture; they are clearly drawn up, and faithfully presented. And what is the expenditure they specify? This among other things (let the context testify): the hatred of father and mother and sisters and brethren, the losing of one's own life, the taking up of the cross, the forsaking

all a man hath. These be strong words, but, brethren, they are Christ's, and there are those, many and many a one, who have found them no whit beyond the facts. This brings me to the third point in the parable, for which we are now prepared, namely, the consequence that too often takes place from a rash and ill-considered beginning. For a time the building proceeds. He has founded it in accordance with God's appointment, he rears it in conformity with God's plan. But there comes a period when the enterprise gets costly. It touches him on the side of his comfort, touches him on the side of his pride, and the unaccustomed drain begins. It is first a call on his time, time he wanted to use as he liked; next a wrench of affection, the severance of a tie which was dear to the flesh, but which Christian principle forbade; next, the sudden disappointing of desire—desire which only a disciple of Christ would possibly have been asked to deny himself; then an inroad on his purse. And thus there comes a time when in his own heart of hearts the ominous uncertainty begins, even though shame for a time makes him persevere. "Have I not gone too far?" he is now beginning to ask of himself, "and may not this tower of mine bear curtailing, without any loss to the general design? God will make allowance for my poverty, and the world will be unaware of the difference, or approve of it." So, lesser inconsistencies creep in; lesser incompletenesses make themselves manifest; there is a saving here and a saving there. Already the man's life has fallen below his profession; the execution of the building is not up to the plan, and the end of it all throws its shadow before. We all know what that was. Alas, he had not sufficiently examined himself; he had not sufficiently counted the cost. He did not know all he was doing when he separated himself from the world's companionship, and resolved to take up the cross of Christ. Better never to have asserted a superiority to the world at all, than, having assumed the position by leaving it, thereafter to renounce it by going back. When Pliable re-entered the City of Destruction with the mud of his expedition bespattering his clothes, and its terrors still pale on his face, the city was moved round about him, and we read that some called him foolish for going, and others called him wise for coming back. But I can fancy that even these did not quite take the erring one back to their arms, nor forget the facts of his escapade, and that all the time he went in and out in the midst of them the consciousness never faded from their hearts, the sneer never passed from their lips. And when the man who has begun to build the tower of a religious profession, and is compelled to leave it unfinished, slinks back to the comrades his enterprise has offended, saying, "Brothers, I find I have made a mistake; I am, after all, no better than yourselves; I will henceforth make amends for my folly by dwelling in a house and sitting at a table like your own," think you that the world will have any sympathy or respect for him? It may applaud him to his face, but behind his back there will ever be the pointed finger and the whispered scoff: "That man began to build, and was not able to finish." For, oh! here is the solemn thought. The man may change his mind, but the fabric he has reared remains notwithstanding, the monument of his pride and his folly alike, unhonoured, untenanted, and unfinished. There the building stands, in the words of seeming sincerity the man has spoken, in the Christian teaching he has published, in the Christian schemes he has launched, all which he has long since abandoned, because he had failed to lay his account with the difficulties, had forgotten to count the cost. And through all time the unfinished fabric shall remain, the sorrow of the Church and the triumph of the world, ay, and perhaps throughout eternity too, as the rebuke of conscience and the taunt of the lost. Hitherto we have moved only along the strict lines of the parable, and narrowed ourselves to the special thought that the Saviour was enforcing at the time. But there are several thoughts in connection with the passage before us, which, though not exactly in it, are so closely akin to it and so naturally suggested by it, that we cannot quite omit them. 1. And first, are there any among us who have been saying to themselves, "But we have been building the tower. Ours has been a Christian profession ever since our earliest years. And really we have had no experience of the difficulties of which you speak. So far as we know, our operations have awakened no one's envy, and provoked no one's hostility." And do you think, therefore, that the statements already made as to the costliness of a Christian profession are overdrawn and exaggerated, suitable perhaps to the times in which the Saviour spoke, but scarcely suitable to our own? Remember, however, ye who speak thus, that there is an evil quite as bad as unfinished building, and that is unstable building. 2. Then, again, it follows from all this, that we are to be cautious and careful in our judg-

ments as to those around us, whom we might have expected to build, but who seem to hesitate. Of the utterly indifferent, who have never yet faced the matter nor once realized the claims of Christ, we do not, of course, speak. But there are others who have not yet taken up a Christian position, not from want of thought, but rather because they are thinking so deeply. They, at any rate, are sensible of the cost, and are settling down to count it. And that is better than the conduct of the man who complacently offers God a service that costs him nothing, and perseveres in his presumption, or of the man who rashly begins what is costly, and then desists. 8. But thirdly, a word in closing to this very class,—the backward and reluctant. Brother, you are counting the cost. You do well to count it. Christ here counsels you to count it. And you feel, do you, that it is a risk that you cannot honestly face? Far better, do you say, to be a consistent man of the world than an imperfect professor of religion—like him who began the tower, and was not able to finish? True, again; but is your state of hesitation therefore defensible? Do you think Christ bids any man sit down and count the cost of the project only that he may renounce it altogether? Nay, verily; it is only that out of a deep sense of your weakness you may be driven to ask the needed strength from Himself, and, knowing that you have not the wherewithal to carry on the fabric He nevertheless seeks you to rear, you may be thrown on the helpfulness and ready supplies of Him who giveth liberally and upbraideth not. (*W. Gray.*)

Religion:—The great fact which our Lord designs to illustrate is this—that numbers embrace the gospel from reasons that are not conclusive, and when stronger reasons, as they appear to them, arise in their intercourse with social life, they lightly renounce a creed they lightly adopted. I. First, there are those who ACCEPT RELIGION MERELY FROM IMPULSE. They are constitutionally the creatures of impulse. One man is the creature of feeling; another is more the creature of intellectual conviction; another is more borne away or decided in his course by fact. The Scotchman must have strong arguments; the Irishman must have eloquent appeals; and the Englishman must have hard matter of fact. Each nation has its idiosyncrasy; each individual his peculiar temperament. Men who are the creatures of strong and impetuous emotion, subscribe to a creed, if I may use the expression, on the spur of the moment, and because they feel profoundly, they think they are convinced, and that the creed which they adopt is demonstrable and necessarily true. Now, I answer—this will not be sufficient to keep you steadfast. This is commencing the “tower,” before you have laid a fit foundation; this is plunging into a conflict whilst you have not the weapons that will enable you to conquer. Feeling in religion is right; but feeling must not be all. An eloquent appeal may move you, but it ought not to decide you. II. In the second place, there is THE RELIGION OF THE CROWD. Many men are religious in a crowd, who are most irreligious when alone. They like what seems to be popular; they can be Christians in the mass, but not Christians when insulated from others. Many a soldier is a coward when alone, but he becomes a hero in his rank and place in the battalion. III. There is a third sort of religion—THE RELIGION OF MERE CIRCUMSTANCE. People often accept the religion of those they love, and with whom they associate. IV. There are others whose religion is simply THE RELIGION OF TRADITION. An outside robe; not the inner life. V. There is another religion which may be called, THE RELIGION OF SENTIMENT. This religion is nourished by all the beautiful and the romantic. It is the religion of Athens rather than the religion of Jerusalem—the religion of painters and of poets, rather than the religion of thinking and intellectual minds. VI. There is another religion which is equally false; and that is THE RELIGION OF MERE FORM. It regards the outer aspect of things; not the inner light. This is not a religion that will stand. VII. And in the next place let me add, there is THE RELIGION OF INTELLECT. If some profess Christianity from sentimental sympathy with its beautiful parts, and others profess Christianity from admiration of its ritual, or its form, there are others who profess Christianity from deep intellectual apprehension of it; and yet theirs is a religion that will not stand. VIII. And, lastly, there is another religion which will still more surprise you when I say that it also may be a religion that will not stand—THE RELIGION OF CONSCIENCE. It is possible for conscience to be in religion, and yet your heart not to be the subject of living and experimental Christianity. You will go to the house of God because your conscience would torment you if you did not do so. But is this the beautiful, the blessed, the happy religion of Jesus? Such service is slavery; such duties drudgery; and such a religion is a ceaseless and perpetual penance, and not “righteousness and peace in the Holy Ghost.” (*J. Cumming, D.D.*) On

counting the cost :—THE COST ATTENDING THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION. 1. In order to be the disciples of Christ, there is much that we must instantly renounce. It is a profession of holiness : it, therefore, demands the immediate renunciation of criminal and forbidden pleasures. By His gospel, and by His Son, God has "called us, not to uncleanness, but to holiness"; so that he that despiseth the precepts of purity, despiseth not man but God. 2. The Christian profession is spiritual, and therefore requires the renunciation of the world. 3. In order to be a disciple it is necessary, in the concerns of conscience, to renounce every authority but that of Christ. The connection of a Christian with the Saviour is not merely that of a disciple with his teacher; it is the relation of a subject to his prince. "One is your Master, even Christ." 4. The cost of which we are speaking relates to what we are to expect. In general, to commence the profession of a Christian, is to enter upon a formidable and protracted warfare; it is to engage in an arduous contest, in which many difficulties are to be surmounted, many enemies overcome. The path that was trod by the great Leader is that which must be pursued by all his followers. 5. The cost of the Christian profession stands related to the term and duration of the engagement—"Be thou faithful unto death." It is coeval with life. II. WHY, WE SAY, IS IT EXPEDIENT FOR THOSE WHO PROPOSE TO BECOME CHRISTIANS TO "COUNT THE COST"? 1. It will obviate a sense of ridicule and of shame (see the context). 2. It will render the cost less formidable when it occurs. 3. If it diminishes the number of those who make a public and solemn profession, this will be more than retrieved by the superior character of those who make it. The Church will be spared much humiliation; Satan and the world deprived of many occasions of triumph. III. THE REASONS WHICH SHOULD DETERMINE OUR ADHERENCE TO CHRIST, NOTWITHSTANDING THE COST WHICH ATTENDS IT. 1. His absolute right to command or claim our attachment. 2. The pain attending the sacrifices necessary to the Christian profession greatly alleviated from a variety of sources. 3. No comparison betwixt the cost and the advantages. (*R. Hall, M.A.*) **True heroism : counting the cost :—**The cost of a Christian profession, if it be genuine and true. Alas! to be called Christian, to have the Christian name, to pass muster with the world as a Christian, is a light and little thing; and as John Bunyan well paints in his admirable portraiture of the false as well as the true professor; "There are many By-ends, who like to go with religion when religion goes in silver slippers, who love to walk with him in the street, if the sun shines and the people applaud him, but such By-ends will not pass muster in the great day." They may be esteemed members of the visible Church, but the question is, "Will they stand the test in the great day, when the Lord comes to reckon with the servants?" If, indeed, we understand the Christian profession as Jesus portrays it, we cannot suppose it is a thing that does not require to be weighed well. There is a cost, there is a sacrifice to be counted upon, there are difficulties and dangers to be looked forward to, there is much to be borne up against that will be hard to bear, and on these things we are to decide. If a man must thus deny himself in order to be a soldier of his country, how much more must he deny himself to be a soldier under the Captain of his salvation? He requires us to renounce His enemies, who are our foes, let us not forget, though we naturally regard them as our friends. Our sympathies are with them, and our desires and tastes lead us captive after them. A man must make his election; will you have Jesus to be your Redeemer? But we must not glance only at what a man must *forego*, but at what he must *undergo*; and here is the part of the cost that many shrink from. For instance, a young man is entangled in the midst of worldly connections, and he begins to look more serious, and to go to church, and to read his Bible regularly, and to find out that he is disinclined to go to the theatre, and to scenes of rioting and revelling, and to join the multitude to do evil. He knows what will follow, but the cross must be taken up. He will be laughed at by the silly and ungodly. And therefore, brethren, there is a cost; a man must undergo shame and the cross; it will not do to dismiss it, to muzzle it, to step over it even in order to escape it, for, as the Master tells us, "If any man will come after Me, he must bear his cross" daily and hourly. If a man counts the cost, he counts also the help and succour he shall find; for he knows his weakness, and he learns his strength; and if he finds himself encompassed with danger, he will not rush into the temptation, but he will nestle beneath the Almighty wings, and shelter beneath the ark of safety. In the first place, if a man count the cost of taking up the standard, and enlisting in the army of Christ, he has to obey the simple claims of Christ as one in whom there is power and authority. And then, brethren, let us not forget that if the service of Christ has its sorrows, it has its joys; if it has its

self-denials, it has its self-indulgences; if here there are thorns and briers, the world above has everlasting flowers, and heavenly violets, and sweet-smelling lilies, that shed a fragrance around all and above all; and though the way may be narrow, it is a straight one; it has no pitfalls, no traps, no bitter fears, no dark forebodings, no haunting spirits, but it has the "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." It saves a man from a thousand snares, it shields him from a thousand dark remorses, it guards him from a thousand fearful misgivings, and enables him to look God and man in the face. Can the world, or the service of the world, do that? Then, to sum up all, if we cast into the balance of gains "life everlasting," surely that must make the scale touch the ground, and the opposite scale strike the beam. "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" "I reckon," said one, who had large experience of the world's trials, "that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Can language go further? And that is not the language of a fanatic or a fool, but of the Spirit of God, teaching us through one whom He had taught with Divine wisdom, that overcoming is heroism. The heroism of the Cross—that is true heroism. (*H. Stowell, M.A.*) *Holiness: the cost.*—I. WHAT IT COSTS TO BE A TRUE CHRISTIAN.

1. It will cost a man his self-righteousness. He must be content to go to heaven as a poor sinner saved only by free grace, and owing all to the merit and righteousness of another. "Sir," said a godly ploughman to the well-known James Hervey, of Weston Favell, "it is harder to deny proud self than sinful self. But it is absolutely necessary." 2. It will cost a man his sins. No truce with any one of them. This also sounds hard. Our sins are often as dear to us as our children: we love them, hug them, cleave to them, and delight in them. To part with them is as hard as cutting off a right hand, or plucking out a right eye. But it must be done. 3. It will cost a man his love of ease. He must take pains and trouble, if he means to run a successful race towards heaven. He must be careful over his time, his tongue, his temper, his thoughts, his imagination, his motives, his conduct in every relation of life. 4. It will cost a man the favour of the world. He must count it no strange thing to be mocked, ridiculed, slandered, persecuted, and even hated.

II. WHY COUNTING THE COST IS OF SUCH GREAT IMPORTANCE TO MAN'S SOUL. There are many persons who are not thoughtless about religion: they think a good deal about it. They are not ignorant of religion: they know the outlines of it pretty well. But their great defect is that they are not "rooted and grounded" in their faith. For want of "counting the cost" myriads of the children of Israel perished miserably in the wilderness between Egypt and Canaan. For want of "counting the cost" many of our Lord Jesus Christ's hearers went back after a time, and "walked no more with Him." For want of "counting the cost," hundreds of professed converts, under religious revivals, go back to the world after a time and bring disgrace on religion. They begin with a sadly mistaken notion of what is true Christianity. They fancy it consists in nothing more than a so-called "coming to Christ," and having strong inward feelings of joy and peace. And so, when they find after a time that there is a cross to be carried, that our hearts are deceitful, and that there is a busy devil always near us, they cool down in disgust, and return to their old sins. And why? Because they had really never known what Bible Christianity is. For want of "counting the cost," the children of religious parents often turn out ill, and bring disgrace on Christianity. And why? They had never thoroughly understood the sacrifices which Christianity entails. They had never been taught to "count the cost."

III. HINTS WHICH MAY HELP MEN TO COUNT THE COST RIGHTLY. Set down honestly and fairly what you will have to give up and go through if you become Christ's disciple. Leave nothing out. But then set down side by side the following sums which I am going to give you. Do this fairly and correctly, and I am not afraid for the result. 1. Count up and compare, for one thing, the profit and the loss, if you are a true-hearted and holy Christian. You may possibly lose something in this world, but you will gain the salvation of your immortal soul. 2. Count up and compare, for another thing, the praise and the blame, if you are a true-hearted and holy Christian. You may possibly be blamed by man, but you will have the praise of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. 3. Count up and compare, for another thing, the friends and the enemies, if you are a true-hearted and holy Christian. On the one side of you is the enmity of the

devil and the wicked. On the other, you have the favour and friendship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Your enemies at most can only bruise your heel. They may rage loudly, and compass sea and land to work your ruin; but they cannot destroy you. Your Friend is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him. 4. Count up and compare, for another thing, the life that now is and the life to come, if you are a true-hearted and holy Christian. The time present, no doubt, is not a time of ease. It is a time of watching and praying, fighting and struggling, believing and working. But it is only for a few years. The time future is the season of rest and refreshing. Sin shall be cast out. 5. Count up and compare, for another thing, the pleasures of sin and the happiness of God's service, if you are a true-hearted and holy Christian. The pleasures that the worldly man gets by his ways are hollow, unreal, and unsatisfying. They are like the fire of thorns, flashing and crackling for a few minutes, and then quenched for ever. The happiness that Christ gives to His people is something solid, lasting, and substantial. It is not dependent on health or circumstances. It never leaves a man, even in death. 6. Count up and compare, for another thing, the trouble that true Christianity entails, and the troubles that are in store for the wicked beyond the grave. Such sums as these, no doubt, are often not done correctly. Not a few, I am well aware, are ever "halting between two opinions." They cannot make up their minds that it is worth while to serve Christ. They cannot do this great sum correctly. They cannot make the result so clear as it ought to be. But what is the secret of their mistakes? It is want of faith. That faith which made Noah, Moses, and St. Paul do what they did, that faith is the great secret of coming to a right conclusion about our souls. That same faith must be our helper and ready-reckoner when we sit down to count the cost of being a true Christian. That same faith is to be had for the asking. "He giveth more grace" (James iv. 6). Armed with that faith we shall set things down at their true value. Filled with that faith we shall neither add to the cross nor subtract from the crown. Our conclusions will be all correct. Our sum total will be without error. (*Bishop Ryle.*)

*(On the folly of profession without forethought:—*I. The entrance upon, and progress in, a religious life, may, with some considerable propriety, be COMPARED TO THE BUILDING OF A TOWER. Something to be done by us. Many graces to be exercised, many temptations to be resisted, many enemies to be vanquished, and many duties to be performed. The power of religion must first be felt, then a profession of it made, and, last of all, care taken to adorn the profession; the whole of which may be compared to building a tower, because—1. There must be a foundation to support the building. Christ—the foundation of doctrinal, experimental, and practical religion. 2. It is a work of labour and difficulty. Requires exertion of all the strength we have, and every day fresh supplies out of the fulness of Christ. 3. A gradual work. A tower reaching to heaven. Patient continuance in well-doing. 4. A visible work. The Christian is a spectacle to world, angels, and men. His sufferings make him so; his conduct, so different from that of others, makes him so; and though the springs of his life are "hid," yet the workings and effect of it are manifest to the world. Grace makes a visible change in the temper and conversation. 5. A durable work. True religion is like a strong and well-built tower, secure itself, and a security to its builder. The foundation and materials of it are both lasting. II. THIS WORK CALLS FOR GREAT CAUTION AND CIRCUMSPECTION. 1. The Christian will consider beforehand the certain and necessary expense. (1) Remorse for past sin. (2) Conflict with spiritual enemies. (3) Corruptions to be mortified. 2. To this he will add the possible and contingent expense. Not only what it *must*, but what it *may*, cost him. Friends may desert him, enemies assail, and a thousand obstacles be thrown in the way to discourage him. 3. There is another kind of expense which such a one will also take into account, not only what it will cost him, but what—if I may be allowed to use the expression—it must cost God, before He can finish his work. The Spirit of God must afford him His continual aid, and Christ's strength must be made perfect in his weakness. No spiritual duty can be performed without a Divine influence. 4. To the labour and expense he is at, he will oppose the benefits and advantages hoped for. The cross is the way to the crown. 5. Where this caution and circumspection is neglected, it is an instance of egregious folly, and will expose to universal shame and contempt. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*)

*Unfinished works:—*Such uncompleted buildings, open to all the winds and rains of heaven, with their naked walls, and with all that has been spent upon them utterly wasted, are called in the language of the world, which often finds so apt a word, This man's, or that

man's Folly; arguing as they do so utter a lack of wisdom and prevision on their parts who began them. Such, for example, is Charles the Fifth's palace at Granada, the Kattenburg at Cassel. They that would be Christ's disciples shall see to it that they present no such Babels to the ready scorn of the scornful; beginning as men that would take heaven by storm, and anon coming to an end of all their resources, of all their zeal, all their patience, and leaving nothing but an utterly baffled purpose, the mocking-stock of the world; even as those builders of old left nothing but a shapeless heap of bricks to tell of the entire miscalculation which they had made. Making mention of "a tower," I cannot but think that the Lord intended an allusion to that great historic tower, the mightiest and most signal failure and defeat which the world has ever seen, that tower of Babel, which, despite of its vainglorious and vaunting beginning, ended in the shame, confusion, and scattering of all who undertook it (Gen. xi. 1-9). (*Archbishop Trench.*)

Vers. 31, 32. Or what king, going to make war.—Consider before you fight.—I. First, then, THERE ARE SOME HERE WHO ARE NOT THE FRIENDS OF GOD, and in this case he that is not with Him is against Him. If you could have what you wish there would be no God. If it were in your power you would never trouble yourself again with thoughts of Him. You would like to live, you say, as you list, and I know how you would list to live. It would be anyhow, rather than as God commands. Now, as you are engaged in antagonism with Him, just think awhile—Can you expect to succeed? Let me put a few things before you which may, perhaps, make you think the conflict too unequal, and thus lead you to abandon the thought at once. Think of God's stupendous power! What is there which He cannot do? Think, again, O rebellious man, you have to deal not only with almighty, but with an ever-encompassing power. Think, again, how much you are personally in His hand! It is well also to remember the mighty army of the Lord of hosts, and that you live amidst the creatures of God, who all are ready to do His bidding. Remember, moreover, what is the extent of God's wisdom, and that His foolishness is greater than your highest knowledge. Yet there is another matter I want you to recollect, you that are the enemies of God—that you have a conscience. You have not got rid of it yet. It is not put out; and God has ways of making it to become a terrible plague to you, if you do not accept it as a friend. One other reflection, for I must not keep you thinking on this point long—it is this. Remember you must die, and therefore it is a pity to be at enmity with God. Here is this, too, to think of, there is a future state, so that when you die you have to live again. I should not choose to enter upon the realm of spirits without having God to be my friend. Besides, let me say, you cannot hope to succeed, all experience is against you; there never was one yet that, either in this state or the next, has fought with God and conquered. II. And now we turn the subject, so as to look at THE SECOND CONTEST, IN WHICH I TRUST MANY ARE ANXIOUS TO BE ENGAGED. Some young spirit that has been touched with a sense of its own condition, and somewhat aroused, may be saying, "I will be God's enemy no longer; I will be His friend." Bowing the knee, that heart cries, "Oh God, reconcile me unto Thyself by the death of Thy dear Son. I throw down all my weapons; I confess my guilt; I plead for mercy. For Jesus' sake vouchsafe it to me." "But," says that soul, "if I am the friend of God, I must be the foe of Satan, and from this day I pledge myself to fight for ever with Satan till I get the victory, and am free from sin." My dear friend, I want you to stop. I do not wish you to make peace with the evil one, but I want you to consider what you are at. There are a few things I would whisper in your ear, and one is, that sin is sweet. Remember, again, you may be enticed by friends who will be very pressing. You can give up sin just now, but you do not know who may be the tempter at some future time. If she should allure thee, who has tempted so well before! Then again, remember, man, there is habit. You say you will all of a sudden give up your sins and fight Satan. Do not tell me that; can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Again, you think you will give up sin, but ridicule is very unpleasant, and when the finger comes to be pointed at you, and they say, "Ah, so you have set up for a saint, I see"; when they put it as they only can put it, in such a sharp, cutting, grating manner, can you stand that! And yet further, let me say to you, you that are for going to heaven so zealously—gain, gain is a very pretty thing, a very pleasant affair. Who does not like to make money? You know, if you can be religious and grow rich at the same time, that will just suit some of you. Think of this then, for the trial will come to you in the shape of

yellow gold, and it will be hard to keep yourself from the glittering bait which the god of this world will lay before you. I am putting these things to you, so that you may calculate whether you can carry on the war against the devil with all these fearful odds against you. If I were a recruiting-serjeant I should not do this. He puts the shilling into the country lad's hand, and the lad may say fifty things. "Oh, never mind," says the gallant soldier, "you know, it is all glory, nothing but glory. There, I will just tie these ribbons round your hat. There are some long strips of glory to begin with, and then all your days it will be just glory, glory for ever; and you will die a general, and be buried at Westminster Abbey, and they will play the 'Dead March in Saul,' and all that kind of thing." Now I cannot thus deceive or try to cheat men to enlist under the banner of the Cross. I do not desire to raise objections to it; all I want of you is to count the cost, lest you should be like unto him who began to build without being able to finish. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

The Christian war.—The doctrine here is, that a sinner who designs to close with Christ, and become His disciple, should first consult matters well, and then take courage and not fear any enemy, but resolutely pursue his great and good design. I. SHOW PARTICULARLY WHAT A POOR SINNER, WHO DESIGNS TO ENTER UPON THIS WAR, SHOULD CONSULT. 1. He should consult the charge of this war. He who spares one beloved lust will be worsted and lose the field. 2. He should consult what great hardship he must undergo. 3. He should consult the cause and absolute necessity of the war. 4. He should consult the length or duration of the war. 5. He must consider at whose charge the war is to be carried on and maintained. Christ's riches and treasures are infinite and inexhaustible. 6. He should carefully consider the manner and time when he must enlist, and what armour he must wear (Heb. iii. 13; Eph. vi. 14-17). 7. He must consider the strength, policy, wrath, and cruelty of Satan and other enemies. 8. He must be sensible of his own weakness, and never engage in his own name or strength. 9. He must consider the power and irresistible strength of his Captain, the Lord Jesus Christ. 10. He must consider the covenant of peace, the oath and promises of God the Father to Christ as Mediator, and in Him to all believers; also, how in that covenant all the elect are put into Christ's hand, not only to redeem them, to renew them, but also to aid, help, and assist, and to fight for them; yea, and to strengthen and support them. 11. He must consider the relation in which they stand to their Captain. He has espoused and married them for ever. 12. They should also know that all their enemies are already conquered. 13. They should consider the honour of God, and the honour, exaltation, and glory of their Captain, and prefer that above their lives. While we seek His glory, He will seek our good. 14. They should consider the nature of the crown for which they fight.

II. SHOW WHY SINNERS SHOULD SIT DOWN AND CONSIDER THESE THINGS BEFORE THEY ENTER INTO THESE WARS. 1. Because man is naturally self-confident, and thinks he can do wonderful things by his own strength; but did he know how weak he is, and how deceitful his heart is, and all the powers of his soul, he would not pride it so in himself, nor ever venture to go forth in his own strength against one who is so much stronger than he. 2. Because all who ever engaged these enemies, not considering their own weakness, but went out in their own strength, were put to flight and utterly beaten. 3. Because our Lord would have none of His soldiers be surprised, either by the power, wrath, malice, or subtlety of the enemy. 4. That we may be better prepared for the worst. Forewarned, forearmed. Application: 1. This informs us that the work of a Christian is no easy, but a very hard and difficult, work. 2. It may inform us what the reason is that so many professors, who seemed zealous in times of peace and liberty, have deserted in an hour of trial and persecution. They did not sit down and consider the strength of their enemies. 3. It may be of use to all poor convinced sinners that purpose to follow Jesus Christ, first of all to ponder and well weigh the nature, troubles, and difficulties of a Christian life. 4. It also may tend to convince us of the great strength and power of Satan and other enemies of our souls, and the need we have to be well armed and to stand always upon our watch, and never give way to self-confidence. 5. It shows also the woeful condition of unbelievers, who have not the power of Christ to help and assist them. (*B. Keach.*)

Unequal to the war.—Louis XII., King of France, sent an army into Italy to take the kingdom of Naples, which had been given to Louis XI. by King René of Provence. When Alfonso, King of Naples, heard that Louis and other enemies were coming against him, he looked round for help, and actually begged the Sultan of Turkey to aid him. Not getting assistance in this quarter, and having no army fit to oppose that of Louis, he made peace with him, gave up Naples, accepted the

Duchy of Anjou, and went to live there. *First weigh, then venture*:—Count Von Moltke, the great German strategist and general, chose for his motto, “*Erst wägen, dann wagen*” (First weigh, then venture), and it is to this he owes his great victories and successes. Slow, cautious, careful in planning, but bold, daring, even seemingly reckless in execution, the moment his resolve is made. Vows must ripen into deeds, decision must go on to performance. (*H. O. Mackay*.)

Ver. 33. He cannot be My disciple.—Christ requires supreme regard:—I. THE POSSESSIONS WHICH JESUS CHRIST REQUIRES US TO FORSAKE IN ORDER TO OUR BECOMING HIS DISCIPLES. In our text Jesus Christ authoritatively asserts the absolute right and the first claim to all that we have and to all that we are. Ourselves and our possessions are to be His. We are to consider ourselves not as proprietors, but only as stewards. 1. Christ requires us to forsake the world and the things of the world. 2. Christ requires us to exercise self-denial, and to bear the cross daily. 3. Jesus Christ requires us to forsake our own relatives, whenever they would hinder us from following Him. 4. Jesus Christ requires you to forsake even life itself rather than renounce Him and His cause. **II. THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF OUR BEING HIS DISCIPLES IF WE REFUSE TO COMPLY WITH HIS REQUIREMENT.** “He cannot be My disciple.” The solemn and authoritative manner in which this decision is pronounced ought very deeply to affect our hearts. Christ, you perceive, does not say that such a man is an inconsistent disciple, or an ungrateful disciple, or a half-hearted disciple; but He says that he is not a disciple at all; nay, says He, “he cannot be My disciple.” He may profess to be a disciple, and he may be acknowledged as a disciple by others, but he is not one; and though men and angels should declare, “Behold a disciple indeed!” Christ would reply, “I know him not!” And this decision, be it remembered, my brethren, is not mine, but Christ’s. **III. THE MEANS AND THE MOTIVES WHICH JESUS CHRIST AFFORDS TO INDUCE AND TO ENABLE US TO COMPLY WITH HIS REQUIREMENT.** And here I intend to show that we ought to forsake all for Christ, because it is the most reasonable and advantageous duty that we can discharge. 1. We should forsake all that we have for Christ, because He commands us to do so. 2. We should forsake all that we have for Christ, because He hath loved us and given Himself for us. 3. We should forsake all that we have for Christ, because He has promised to enable us to do so if we ask Him. 4. We should forsake all for Christ, because He can give us infinitely more than we can relinquish for His sake. (*J. Alexander*.) *An Indian’s all*:—An Indian, on being asked how it was that he came into the kingdom of Christ so easily, at once replied, “We are commanded to forsake all. The white man have to give up his house; but I have no house. The white man have to give up his riches; but I have no riches. The white man have to give up his farm; but I have no farm. Indian have nothing to give up but his blanket, and I throw off my blanket very easily.” *Yielding all to Christ*:—In America a farmer felt convinced that he was not living to Christ as he ought, with that warm-hearted earnestness which characterises those who are born again. He was a large farmer, and had a great number of stacks in his yard. He went into the centre one day, and threw himself on his face, and said he would have it out with God. He prayed to Jesus Christ, and found forgiveness through His righteousness. He got up to tell his wife and children. It was Pentecost-like. Peter said, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” The farmer believed it, and went home, but he had not reached the fence ere he was arrested by a voice which said there was something more. He stopped, and cried out, “O Lord, what more? is there anything more, and I will give it Thee?” He went back to the spot where he was bound to Christ, and reiterated again, “What more, O Lord; is there any more I can do?” And something told him that he had not given up the stackyard to the Lord. He burst out, “Lord, I yield; take the stack-yard—take the horses—take the farm!” He returned to his wife and children. But there was something else; he had a large balance at the bank. He had been a prosperous man, and was counting on the better time when he could hold a palatial residence for himself and family. That money was not given to the Lord; but he cried out, “Take it, Lord; I give it all up.” And instead of building a residence he built a chapel, and supported the ministers of God, and went to the camp meeting, and gave his stack-yard, farm-houses, his wife and children, into the hand of the Lord. He used the money in the bank judiciously, and it is a

pleasure to him to lend waggons to his poorer neighbours, and plough their fields. (*Handbook to Scripture Doctrines.*)

Vers. 34, 35. Salt is good.—*Salt that is genuine, and salt that is saltless:—* Among the substances that enter into the composition of this globe of earth, salt is a very important one, being of essential use in the economy of the world, and eminently conducive to the preservation of human life. It may be regarded as the grand conservative principle of nature, whose office is to keep this earth, the habitation of man, in a wholesome state, to check the progress of decay and corruption, and promote the health and wellbeing of the animal world. To fit it for these important purposes, the All-wise Creator, who communicates to every element its peculiar character, has given it the quality of being soluble in water, and has thus made it capable of diffusing itself over the whole globe, impregnating the various departments of nature, and penetrating the finest fibres of vegetable and animal substances—a hidden agent that, by means of the element that holds it in solution, conveys its salutary influence to every region of creation. Suspended in strong infusion in the ocean, it preserves its immense reservoirs from putrefaction, and makes them the means of conveying health to the shores they wash, and salubrity to the atmosphere that rises above them; while it further serves, by increasing the gravity of the waters, to aid in buoying up the tribes that inhabit and the ships that navigate them. It is largely deposited in the heart of the earth, in rocks and strata. It is also found to enter into the composition of plants, some of which yield it in large quantities, and even to form an ingredient in the bodies of animals. If this element were withdrawn, the great deep, we have reason to think, would become a putrid pool, the air would consequently be a pestilential vapour, and vegetable and animal life would quickly be extinct. Now our Lord here speaks of salt in a figurative sense, using it as an illustration to declare the excellence and usefulness of the Christian character, as exemplified in those who maintain it faithfully and consistently; and the loss of all excellence, the shipwreck of all valuable attainments and of all good hope, in those who forsake and abandon the principles and spirit with which they once started on the Christian race. I. THE EXCELLENCE AND USEFULNESS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. The disciples of Christ are destined to the same office in the moral world that salt supplies in the natural—namely, to check the progress of corruption, and diffuse salubrity and health; and while they preserve their appropriate character, they fulfil this high destination. Sound in principle and exemplary in conduct themselves, they serve to arrest corruption in others; savouring the things of God, they communicate the same unction to others; active and beneficent, they extend a beneficial influence around them. The faithful followers of Christ are like “good salt,” in respect of those principles of truth which they embrace and maintain. For error corrupts the mind, and, insinuating itself through its faculties, “will eat as doth a canker,” and blend in all its communications; truth is the healing salt that arrests its progress and defeats the operation of the poison. Again, the true disciples are like good salt in respect of that temper of mind, and those good and gracious affections, which they cherish and manifest. For the truths of the gospel, when received in faith, fail not to renovate the heart and inspire it with corresponding dispositions: they necessarily awaken an unfeigned piety and holy reverence toward God, a simple, child-like dependence on Christ, a genuine benevolence toward men, a true humility, a spirit of sympathy with the afflicted, a desire to do good to all, a disposition to forgive injuries and to overcome evil with good. Now this temper of mind has a healing efficacy: like salt, it is diffusive, and tends to preserve the atmosphere of life from the putrid exhalations of selfishness, envy, and malevolence; it gives also a grateful relish and gracious aspect to society, fostering and maintaining in healthful exercise the substantial blessings of mutual esteem, friendship, and harmony. In a word, the true disciples are like good salt in respect of their whole conduct in life; which, while they act in character, cannot fail to have a beneficial influence, since it both presents a model to be copied, and suggests the motives and arguments that commend it. For their whole manner of life, if candidly interpreted, shows that they are governed by high and heavenly principles—that they are “not of the world, but of the Father.” II. THE RUINED AND UNHAPPY CONDITION OF THOSE WHO ABANDON THAT CHARACTER. If he who bears the Christian name lose the distinctive qualities of his Christianity—if he relinquish those principles of truth which he has professed—if he forsake the Christian temper—if, forgetful of heavenly things, he immerse himself in the world and live for himself,

for gain, for pleasure, and not for Christ—alas! “the glory is departed,” the usefulness of his character as a guide or example is at an end; he becomes, if not a betrayer, yet a deserter, worthless and contemptible, fit only to be “cast out, and trodden under foot.” 1. The salt loses its savour when professing Christians lose their relish for those Divine truths that peculiarly distinguish the gospel and make it what it is. 2. The salt loses its savour when professing Christians lose their relish for the duties of religion. 3. The salt loses its savour when professing Christians imbibe the love and become conformed to the spirit of the world. 4. The salt loses its savour when the professor of religion falls into open immorality. Finally, the salt has lost its savour when the soul learns to vindicate its errors and without shame to persist in them—when reproof is unwelcome, when expostulation is offensive, and the man is anxious rather to defend his character than amend his ways—when, deaf to admonition and rebuke, he wilfully yields himself to the snare of the devil, to be “led captive at his will.” How calamitous such termination of what was hopeful in its beginning! (*H. Gray, D.D.*) *Grace in crystals*:—It would take all time with an infringement upon eternity, for an angel of God to tell one-half the glories in salt-crystal. So with the grace of God; it is perfectly beautiful. Solomon discovered its anatomical qualities when he said, “It is marrow to the bones.” I am speaking now of a healthy religion—not of that morbid religion that sits for three hours on a gravestone reading Hervey’s “Meditations Among the Tombs.” I speak of the religion that Christ preached. I suppose when that religion has conquered the world that disease will be banished. But the chief beauty of grace is in the soul. It takes that which was hard, and cold, and repulsive, and makes it all over again. It pours upon one’s nature what David calls “the beauty of holiness.” It extirpates everything that is hateful and unclean. It took John Bunyan the foul-mouthed, and made him John Bunyan the immortal dreamer. It took John Newton, the infidel sailor, and in the midst of the hurricane made him cry out: “My mother’s God, have mercy upon me!” It took John Summerfield from a life of sin, and by the hand of a Christian edged-tool maker, led him into the pulpit that burns still with the light of that Christian eloquence which charmed thousands to Jesus whom he once despised. Ah! you may search all the earth over for anything so beautiful or beautifying as the grace of God. Go all through the deep mine-passages of Wielitzka, and amid the underground kingdoms of salt in Hallstadt, and show me anything so exquisite, so transcendently beautiful as this grace of God fashioned and hung in eternal crystals. Again, grace is like salt, in the fact that it is a necessity of life. Man and beast perish without salt. What are those paths across the Western prairies? Why, they were made there by deer and buffalo going to and coming away from the salt “licks.” Chemists and physicians, all the world over, tell us that salt is a necessity of life. And so with the grace of God: you must have it or die. I know, a great many people speak of it as a mere adornment, a sort of shoulder-strap adorning a soldier, or a light, frothing dessert brought in after the greatest part of the banquet of life is over. So far from that, I declare the grace of God to be the first and the last necessity. It is a positive necessity for the soul. You can tell very easily what the effect would be if a person refused to take salt into the body. The energies would fail, the lungs would struggle with the air, slow fevers would crawl through the brain, the heart would flutter, and the life would be gone. That process of death is going on in many a one because they take not the salt of Divine grace. Again, I remark, that grace is like salt in abundance. God has strewn salt in vast profusion all over the continents. Russia seems built on a salt-cellar. There is one region of that country that turns out ninety thousand tons in a year. England and Russia and Italy have inexhaustible resources in this respect. Norway and Sweden, white with snow above, white with salt beneath. Austria yielding nine hundred thousand tons annually. Nearly all the nations rich in it—rock-salt, spring-salt, sea-salt. Christ, the Creator of the world, when He uttered our text, knew it would become more and more significant as the shafts were sunk, and the springs were bored, and the pumps were worked, and the crystals were gathered. So the grace of God is abundant. It is for all lands, for all ages, for all conditions. It seems to undergird everything. Pardon for the worst sin, comfort for the sharpest suffering, brightest light for the thickest darkness. Again, the grace of God is like salt in the way we come at it. The salt on the surface is almost always impure—that which incrusts the Rocky Mountains and the South American pampas and in India; but the miners go down through the shafts and through the dark labyrinths, and along by galleries of rock, and with torches and

pickaxes find their way under the very foundations of the earth, to where the salt lies that makes up the nation's wealth. To get to the best saline springs of the earth huge machinery goes down, boring depth below depth, depth below depth, until from under the very roots of the mountains the saline water supplies the aqueduct. This water is brought to the surface, and is exposed in tanks to the sun for evaporation, or it is put in boilers mightily heated, and the water evaporates, and the salt gathers at the bottom of the tank—the work is completed, and the fortune is made. So with the grace of God. It is to be profoundly sought after. With all the concentrated energies of the body, mind, and soul, we must dig for it. Superficial exploration will not turn it up. Then the work of evaporation begins; and as when the saline waters are exposed to the sun the vapours float away, leaving nothing but the pure white salt at the bottom of the tank, so, when the Christian's soul is exposed to the Sun of Righteousness, the vapours of pride and selfishness and worldliness float off, and there is chiefly left beneath, pure, white holiness of heart. Then, as in the case of the salt, the furnace is added. Blazing troubles, stirred by smutted stokers of darkness, quicken the evaporation of worldliness and the crystallization of grace. Have you not been in enough trouble to have that work go on? But, I remark again, that the grace of God is like the salt in its preservative quality. You know that salt absorbs the moisture of articles of food, and infuses them with brine which preserves them for a long while. Salt is the great anti-putrefactive of the world. Experimenters, in preserving food, have tried sugar, and smoke, and air-tight jars, and everything else; but as long as the world stands, Christ's words will be suggestive, and men will admit that, as a great preservative, "salt is good." But for the grace of God the earth would have become a stale carcass long before this. That grace is the only preservative of laws, and constitution, and literatures. Just as soon as a government loses this salt of Divine grace it perishes. We want more of the salt of God's grace in our homes, in our schools, in our colleges, in our social life, in our Christianity. And that which has it will live—that which has it not will die. I proclaim the tendency of everything earthly to putrefaction and death—the religion of Christ the only preservative. My subject is one of great congratulation to those who have within their souls this gospel antiseptic. This salt will preserve them through the temptations and sorrows of life, and through the ages of eternity. (*De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *The salt that has lost its savour*:—He that is ungodly would be ungodly still. And why? Because the salt has lost its savour. The mischief is not without—it is within. The wretched houses, the rent-books, the pawn-shops, are but symptoms—are but the efflorescence of a deep-seated disease—and if we are wise, we shall aim not at putting them to rights, except where grievous distress and impending ruin call for ready rescue; but we shall aim far deeper—we shall be ever musing on and seeking an answer to the question, "Wherewith shall it be seasoned?" And this is just the question which has been occupying so many Christian hearts, and employing so many Christian hands, now for some years in this our land. I called it the most fearful and difficult problem of our times; and every one who has fairly grappled with it will bear me in saying so. No special philanthropic agency will so much as touch the whole matter, however widely and efficiently supported. Each one of these, alone, is but opposing a feeble resistance for a time to the vast and gathering mass as it rolls and plunges downward. "Improve the dwellings of these poor people." Yes; of all mere remedial measures, doubtless this is the most obvious and lies nearest the surface. But how slow the progress; how distant and almost hopeless the result. Then again: "Improve their Sundays." By all means. The general observance of the Lord's day in our land is perhaps the most powerful instrument and the surest pledge for future good, which we possess. But again, How? For here once more we are beset with difficulties. You will be easily able to apply remarks of the same character to those various other agencies which are at work for this most salutary and beneficent purpose. (*Dean Alford.*) *Christianity the salt of the earth*:—A wealthy, irreligious, shrewd business man in Illinois was approached by a member of the Church of Christ for a subscription towards building a meeting-house. He cheerfully put down his name for two hundred dollars, and then remarked, "I give that as a good business investment. I would rather give two hundred dollars every year than not to have the gospel preached in this community." "How is that?" he was asked. "You do not pay any heed to the gospel. Why are you interested in having it preached?" "Oh," he replied, "I live here with my family, and my property is around here; without the influence of Christianity the condition of society would soon become such that neither property nor life

would be safe. I would not be willing to live in any community where the gospel was not preached!" These views of a hard-headed man of the world are confirmed by all experience. Christianity is the salt of the earth. Only the utterly abandoned would be content to live where its influence had ceased to be felt. *Religion should be practical if it is to be influential*.—William Smith, a Primitive Methodist local preacher, had a business letter shown to him from a manufacturer of cloth. The concluding paragraph was a rather high-flown rhapsody about revivals, and some sermon that had been to him (as he said) "wines on the lees." His pair of eyes keenly watched the reader of the letter, to whom he said, when the reading was concluded, "What do you think of that?" Answer: "I don't think I should have written the last paragraph." Response: "I should think not; I only wish the fellow would put his religion into his cloth instead of his invoices." Salt:—I. LOOK AT WHAT IS HERE SO EXPRESSIVELY SYMBOLIZED. "Salt is good." Salt is a necessary of life, and it is an essential element of true altar service. There was no real sacrifice without salt. 1. It is the symbol of the covenant of everlasting mercy, but of everlasting mercy as the basis of a sinner's new life. There is a purpose of grace. God wills not the death of sinners, but their re-union with Him as the God of life. That purpose does not change. God pursues it in spite of the infatuation, the wilfulness, the ingratitude of men; and "He will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." "Salt is good." It is the salt of the great sacrifice for sin. "It is the salt of the covenant of thy God." He receives, and pardons, and renews, and cleanses all who believe on His Son Jesus Christ. No man can be saved but through the Divine mercy, and by an action of the Divine Spirit on mind and heart. 2. Salt symbolizes not only God's covenant of mercy with man, but man's covenant with God. Salt was a human offering on the altar, according to a Divine appointment. It meant, on the part of the offerer, the laying aside of enmity; it meant the submission of the offerer to the terms of the Merciful Sovereign; it meant the surrender of the will—of the life—to the Divine service. Salt symbolizes human consecration. 3. Salt is also the principle of counteractive grace. Antiseptic. The new principles of Divine life in the spirit arrest moral decay; work against the downward, earthly, immoral tendencies and temptations of the heart. 4. Salt symbolizes the preventive, corrective, life-nourishing power of the Christian society in the world. 5. Salt is also the principle of peace. "Peace with God" comes of salt within. With surrender to Him reconciliation is effected; and there is now no condemnation, and no dread, and no discord—man and God live in harmony the perfectest. II. THE SAVIOUR'S LESSON CONCERNING THE DETERIORATION OF THE SALT. Salt symbolizes God's covenant of mercy in its unchangeableness; and there can be no deterioration of that; but there may be a careless feeling concerning its excellence, its necessity, and its grace. Salt symbolizes man's covenant with God—the principle of entire self-surrender; it symbolizes the principle of counteractive grace both in the individual and the Church; and it is the principle of individual and social peace. Of these our Lord declares—1. The possibility of deterioration. "If the salt have lost its savour." Rock salt exposed to the atmosphere becomes utterly tasteless and insipid; it comes to lack all the essential characteristics of its own nature. Whatever the truth may be on the Divine side of the great fact of human redemption, on the human side we are obliged to admit the possibility of a fall from grace. It is involved in the very fact that it is a free human spirit which is being dealt with. 2. Christ marks here three things as characteristic of men in this state. (1) They are useless for any good purpose whatever—useless in the Church, useless in the world. What shall be seasoned with such salt? It is useless to make anything grow. It is a heap and nothing more—neither man nor beast can ever be the better for its existence. (2) Such characters are utterly contemptible. They are neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill, which, if it does not grow itself, helps other things to grow. (3) And last of all they are rejected with utter disdain. "It is henceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men." It must not be allowed even to occupy the place of the real thing. There can be no fellowship between life and death. (*The Preacher's Monthly.*)

CHAPTER XV.

VERs. 1, 2. This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.—Christ's influence with the masses:—The masses were drawn to Christ's teachings.

I. THE REASONS FOR THIS ADMIRATION. 1. All lack of affectation—no parade of greatness, no false assumption of humility. His manner was what beauty is to the landscape, what the sublime, majestic repose of the ocean is to the ocean's greatness. His manner ever reflected the moral grandeur of His being. 2. The originality of His methods. 3. The grandeur and claims of His doctrines. 4. The authority with which He spoke. 5. The adaptation of style and matter to the people. 6. His profound earnestness. 7. His scathing denunciation of the hypocrisy of the ruling sects.

II. THE EFFORTS OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES TO UNDO THIS INFLUENCE. Not because they loved men, but because of caste, of pride, and cold-hearted selfishness.

III. CHRIST'S MANNER OF MEETING THIS OPPOSITION. He takes every opportunity to overcome their prejudice, and enlighten their minds, seeking to impress upon them the superior glories of the new dispensation. (*W. E. McKay.*)

Christ receiving sinners:—I. THE DESCRIPTION OF SINNERS CHRIST WILL RECEIVE. 1. Sinners of all ages. 2. Sinners of all stations. 3. Sinners of all degrees.

II. INTO WHAT JESUS RECEIVES SINNERS. 1. Into His forgiving grace and favour. 2. Into His family. 3. Into His heaven.

III. THE WAY AND MANNER IN WHICH CHRIST RECEIVES SINNERS. 1. In the way of acknowledgment and confession. 2. In the way of repentance, or turning from sin. 3. In the way of humility and faith. Now as to the manner: 1. Most freely. 2. Most tenderly. 3. Most readily.

Application: 1. The subject is one to which every believer's heart responds. 2. The subject is full of encouragement to the inquiring sinner. 3. The subject is limited to the present life. Here only He receives. (*J. Burns, D.D.*)

This man receiveth sinners:—These words were originally spoken as a reproach against our Lord. When we repeat them it is with widely different feelings. They are to us a message of joy—nay, the only true grounds of joy and hope to man.

I. THE PERSONS REFERRED TO. "This man": "sinners." 1. The contrast in its most general aspect. They—"sinners"—evildoers, violators of God's law. He—"holy; separate from sinners." 2. Take the outward life of both. His—faultless, beneficent. Theirs—the reverse. 3. Consider the spirit of His life, and of theirs. Perfect love and confidence in God; perfect love and devotion to the good of man. They, governed by selfishness; destitute of faith; living under influence of impulse, passion, &c.

II. THE RELATION EXPRESSED BETWEEN THESE TWO CLASSES OF PERSONS. 1. What should you expect? A man is known by his companions. Like seeks like. 2. Yet, He receiveth sinners. (1) To mercy and pardon. (2) To grace and guidance. (3) To love and friendship. 3. And all this He does (1) freely; (2) readily; (3) eternally.

III. WHAT IS OUR INTEREST IN THIS SUBJECT? 1. To some, none. But why, and how? Are they not sinners? How, then, can they be saved? Is there another who can thus receive? 2. Do you fear to come? Why? Consider His words of invitation and promise. Consider His acts of welcome and beneficence. 3. Are we received? See that you never abandon His protection. (*W. R. Clark, M.A.*)

Christ receiving sinners:—I. WHO IT IS THAT RECEIVETH SINNERS? 1. "This man." That Christ was "man," may easily be shown from the united and ample testimony of Scripture. Revelation makes no attempt to conceal this fact. It treats it as a matter that is necessary to be known, and as fully and readily to be believed, as His essential and eternal divinity. Godhead without manhood could have effected no atonement for the world's transgression. 2. But "this man" was Divine, He was God "manifested in the flesh," combined all the glory of the Deity with all the weakness of man—all the infirmities of the creature—with acts and attributes splendid and incomprehensible! He was frail as flesh, yet omnipotent as God. Thus was our nature infinitely enriched, though sin had beggared it of all worth. 3. "This man" gave to the universe the most amiable, attractive, and stupendous manifestation of the Deity ever witnessed, a "manifestation" altogether different from any which had been previously afforded. Here was no throne of sapphire, no city of pearl, no retinue of celestials, no blaze of unapproachable brightness, no footpath on the firmament, no chariot rolling "on the wings of the wind," and studded with the stars of the skies. The majestic symbols of the presence and power of the Infinite were kept back, and here was man in weakness, destitution,

reproach, suffering, and death. "This man" showed how low the Deity could stoop, how much the Deity could love, how infinitely the Deity could redeem, with what frail and broken things the Deity could rebuild His moral universe. II. **HOW THIS MAN RECEIVETH SINNERS.** 1. He "received" them universally; His arms of love are ready to embrace all. 2. "Christ received sinners" without upbraiding them on account of their sins. 3. Observe the delightful and blessed certainty that "sinners" have of being "received" by Him. III. **WHAT DOES CHRIST'S RECEPTION OF SINNERS COMPREHEND?** To what are they received? The world receives its votaries, but only to oppress them with its vexations and vanities. Satan receives sinners, but only to slavery and wretchedness. Doth Christ receive them? It is—1. To a state of reconciliation with Himself; He casts around them His Divine complacency, makes and calls them "His friends." 2. Christ "receives sinners" into a state of holiness. He sanctifies all the powers of the intellect, all the affections of the heart, and all the actions of the life. 3. Christ "receives" them under the special protection and guidance of His providence. They rest under the pavilion of the Almighty Redeemer, are encircled as with a wall of fire, and fenced round and defended by the angels of glory. 4. Christ "receives" them into the full immunities of His kingdom of grace. In that kingdom "all things are theirs." 5. Christ "receives the sinners" He thus sanctifies and blesses into heaven. This is the last and greatest gift of God in Christ. This will perfect every holy principle and every religious joy. (*E. Horton.*) *Jesus receiving sinners*:—I. THE WORDS, AS THEY WERE INTENDED, CONTAIN A FALSE AND MALICIOUS CALUMNY. "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." The fact itself was undeniable: but what interpretation did the Pharisees wish to put upon it? 1. They meant to insinuate that the followers of Jesus consisted chiefly of worthless and disreputable characters; and this was false. 2. These murmurers meant to insinuate, further, that Jesus loved the company of sinners for its own sake; and this again was false. 3. Or, perhaps, they meant to insinuate, that those whom He favourably received continued sinners still; and this was as false as the rest. II. THE SAME WORDS UNDESIGNEDLY EXPRESS A MOST GLORIOUS TRUTH. They truly describe—1. The persons on whose behalf the Son of Man is interested—"This man receiveth sinners." (1) None but sinners—among the race of Adam, at least—have any concern or part in Jesus Christ. (2) The vilest of sinners are not shut out from partaking in that mercy, which is equally needful to the most virtuous. (3) Once more—sin still dwelleth even in those who have partaken of the mercy of Christ; yet doth He not cast them off. And why? Because He is not displeased to behold sin in His followers? God forbid! No—but because He delights to see them "fighting manfully" against it, and gradually overcoming it through the power of His grace. 2. The regard which He shows toward them—He "receiveth them, and eateth with them." (1) He receives them to His own favour, and to that of His Father. (2) He receives them to spiritual communion with Himself, and with His Father. (3) He receives them, finally, to His visible presence in the kingdom of His Father. (*J. Jowett, M.A.*) *Christ receiving sinners*:—I. THE IMPIOUS CALUMNY INTENDED. You all know that the proverb has been accepted in all ages, and clothed in all languages, "A man may be ever known by his associates." Tell me his friendships, and I will tell you his nature, for according to his companionships must be his character. Now these Pharisees would force home this proverb upon the holy Saviour. Could He come forth from that Father's bosom, could He have just stepped into this naughty world out of that world of holy love, and not be the Friend of publicans and sinners?—ay, the very best Friend they ever had, for He came to seek and to save the chief, as He said most feelingly who had not been a publican and a sinner, but a Pharisee and a sinner. This shall be to eternity His praise and glory. But then it is said, or it is thought, by some Pharisees and scribes, that such a reception of the sinner is a patronage of his sin—that such a gospel of free grace has a perilous tendency to release man from moral duty; that if good works do not enter into the ground of the sinner's salvation, no obligation remains for the performance of them by the man—just as these Pharisees implied that receiving sinners was to be a patron of their sin. Refute this error whenever it shows itself, as the Lord refuted the slander of the scribes—by the revealed mind of God. I mean by the pure word of Scripture; on the one hand saying, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according unto His mercy He saved us"; and on the other hand affirming "That faith should work by love." II. THE PRECIOUS TRUTH ASSERTED. The eater never did bring forth such sweetness as when this testimony was extorted from wicked men. Why

this revelation of the Father's will? My brethren, the great foundation of all Divine revelation, from the forfeiture of Paradise downward through all its prophecies, and through all its promises, the great foundation of all revelation lies in this little fact, "God receives sinners." Open your Bible, read through the Scripture; it gives you the character of God. Surely the errand of the beloved Son must be in harmony with that character. Listen! hear the declaration of your Father's mind: "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord." Listen to the exhortations of your Father's love: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let Him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Listen to the proclamation of His own name: "The Lord, the Lord God, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." Hear His promise: "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed thee." Hear His remonstrance: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within Me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man." Oh! declarations, expostulations, proclamations, promises, remonstrances, surely these must have their sign and seal in Him, of whom it was said, "See Him, and you see the Father"; of whom it could be said, "The voice of those human lips is the very echo of the voice of God." (*J. P. Eyre, M.A.*)

The approachableness of Jesus:—

I. First let us PROVE THE APPROACHABLENESS OF CHRIST, though it really needs no proof, for it is a fact which lies upon the surface of His life. 1. You may see it conspicuously in His offices. Our Lord Jesus is said to be the Mediator between God and man. Now, observe, that the office of mediator implies at once that he should be approachable. Another of His offices is that of priest. The priest was the true brother of the people, chosen from among themselves, at all times to be approached; living in their midst, in the very centre of the camp, ready to make intercession for the sinful and the sorrowful. So is it with our Lord. You may be separated from all of human kind, justly and righteously, by your iniquities, but you are not separated from that great Friend of sinners who at this very time is willing that publicans and sinners should draw near unto Him. As a third office let me mention that the Lord Jesus is our Saviour; but I see not how He can be a Saviour unless He can be approached by those who need to be saved. 2. Consider a few of His names and titles. Frequently Jesus is called the "Lamb." I do not suppose there is any one here who was ever afraid of a lamb; that little girl yonder, if she saw a lamb, would not be frightened. Every child seems almost instinctively to long to put its hand on the head of a lamb. O that you might come and put your hand on the head of Christ, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Again, you find Him called a Shepherd: no one is afraid of a shepherd. Timid, foolish, and wandering though you may be, there is nothing in the Good Shepherd to drive you away from Him, but everything to entice you to come to Him. Then again, He is called our Brother, and one always feels that he may approach his brother. I have no thought of trouble or distress which I would hesitate to communicate to my brother, because he is so good and kind. Brethren, you can come to the good elder Brother at all hours; and when He blames you for coming, let me know. He is called, too, a Friend; but He would be a very unfriendly friend who could not be approached by those He professed to love. If my friend puts a hedge around himself, and holds himself so very dignified that I may not speak with him, I would rather be without his friendship; but if he be a genuine friend, and I stand at his door knocking, he will say, "Come in, and welcome; what can I do for you?" Such a friend is Jesus Christ. He is to be met with by all needy, seeking hearts. 3. There is room enough for enlargement here, but I have no time to say more, therefore I will give you another plea. Recollect His person. The person of our Lord Jesus Christ proclaims this truth with a trumpet voice. I say His person, because He is man, born of woman, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. 4. If this suffice not, let me here remind you of the language of Christ. He proclaims His approachability in such words as these, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." 5. The old proverb truly saith that "actions speak louder than words," and therefore let us review the general ways and manners of the Redeemer. You may gather that He is the most approachable of persons from the actions of His life.

He was always very busy, and busy about the most important of matters, and yet He never shut the door in the face of any applicant. Not once was He harsh and repulsive. His whole life proves the truth of the prophecy, "The bruised reed He will not break, and the smoking flax He will not quench." 6. But, if you want the crowning argument, look yonder. The man who has lived a life of service, at last dies a felon's death! The cross of Christ should be the centre to which all hearts are drawn, the focus of desire, the pivot of hope, the anchorage of faith. Surely, you need not be afraid to come to Him who went to Calvary for sinners. II. I now shall proceed, with as great brevity as I can command, to ILLUSTRATE THIS GREAT TRUTH. 1. I illustrate it by the way which Christ opens up for sinners to Himself. The coming to Jesus which saves the soul is a simple reliance on Him. 2. This truth is further illustrated by the help which He gives to coming sinners, in order to bring them near to Himself. He it is who first makes them coming sinners. 3. I might further illustrate this to the children of God, by reminding you of the way in which you now commune with your Lord. How easy it is for you to reach His ear and His heart! A prayer, a sigh, a tear, a groan, will admit you into the King's chambers. 4. The approachableness of Christ may also be seen in the fact of His receiving the poor offerings of His people. 5. The ordinances wear upon their forefront the impress of an ever approachable Saviour. Baptism in outward type sets forth our fellowship with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection—what can be nearer than this? The Lord's supper in visible symbol invites us to eat His flesh and drink His blood: this reveals to us most clearly how welcome we are to the most intimate intercourse with Jesus. III. In the third place, we come to ENFORCE THIS TRUTH; or, as the old Puritans used to say, improve it. 1. The first enforcement I give is this: let those of us who are working for the Master in soul-winning, try to be like Christ in this matter, and not be, as some are apt to be, proud, stuck-up, distant, or formal. 2. There is this to be said to you who are unconverted—if Jesus Christ be so approachable, oh! how I wish, how I wish that you would approach Him. There are no bolts upon His doors, no barred iron gates to pass, no big dogs to keep you back. If Christ be so approachable by all needy ones, then needy one, come and welcome. Come just now! 3. The last word is—if Jesus be such a Saviour as we have described Him, let saints and sinners join to praise Him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Open house for all comers:—*

I. JESUS RECEIVING SINNERS. 1. This was and is a great fact—our Lord received, and still receiveth sinners. A philosopher wrote over the door of his academy, "He that is not learned, let him not enter here"; but Jesus speaketh by Wisdom in the Proverbs, and says "Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, let him eat of My bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled" (Prov. ix. 4, 5). He receives sinners as His disciples, companions, friends. "This man receiveth sinners"; not, however, that they may remain sinners, but to pardon their sins, to justify their persons, to cleanse their hearts by the Holy Spirit. 2. I want your attention to another thought—namely, the consistency of this fact. It is a most consistent and proper thing that this man should receive sinners. If you and I reflect awhile we shall remember that the types which were set forth concerning Christ all seem to teach us that He must receive sinners. One of the earliest types of the Saviour was Noah's ark, by which a certain company not only of men but also of the lowest animals were preserved from perishing by water, and were floated out of the old world into the new. Moreover, the Master has been pleased to take to Himself one or two titles which imply that He came to receive sinners. He takes the title of Physician, but as He told these very Pharisees a little while before, "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." There is no practice for the physician in a neighbourhood where every man is well. 3. Observe the condescension of this fact. This man, who towers above all other men, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners—this man receiveth sinners. 4. Notice the certainty of this fact. 5. Do observe the unqualified sense in which the sentence is put, "This man receiveth sinners." But how? What sort of sinners? How are they to feel? How are they to come? Not a word is said about their coming, or their preparation, but simply, "This man receiveth sinners." One man came on his bed—indeed, he did not come, but was brought by other people; Jesus received him all the same for that. II. Now, I wanted to have spoken upon the second head, but I have not had sufficient forethought to store up the time, so we must only say of that just this: that Jesus Christ having once received sinners, enters into the most familiar and endearing intercourse with them that is possible. **HE FEASTS WITH THEM**—their

joys are His joys, their work for God is His work for God. He feasts with them at their table, and they with Him at His table; and He does this wherever the table is spread. It may be in a garret, or in a cellar; in a wilderness, or on a mountain; He still eateth with them. This He does now in the ordinances and means of grace by His Spirit; and this He will do in the fulness of glory, when He takes these sinners up to dwell with Him. (*Ibid.*) *An appeal to sinners*:—Many a true word has been spoken in jest, and many a true word has been spoken in slander. Now the scribes and Pharisees wished to slander Christ; but in so doing they outstripped their intentions, and bestowed upon Him a title of renown. I. First, then, THE DOCTRINE. The doctrine is, not that Christ receiveth everybody, but that He "receiveth sinners." Christ receives not the self-righteous, not the good, not the whole-hearted, not those who dream that they do not need a Saviour, but the broken in spirit, the contrite in heart—those who are ready to confess that they have broken God's laws, and have merited His displeasure. Now, let us remark, that there is a very wise distinction on the part of God, that He hath been pleased thus to choose and call sinners to repentance, and not others. For this reason, none but these ever do come to Him. There has never been such a miracle as a self-righteous man coming to Christ for mercy; none but those who want a Saviour ever did come, and therefore it would be useless for Him to say that He would receive any but those who most assuredly will come. And mark, again, none but those *can* come; no man can come to Christ until he truly knows himself to be a sinner. The self-righteous man cannot come to Christ; for what is implied in coming to Christ? Repentance, trust in His mercy, and the denial of all confidence in one's self. His very self-righteousness fetters his foot, so that he cannot come; palsies his arm, so that he cannot take hold of Christ; and blinds his eye, so that he cannot see the Saviour. Yet another reason: if these people, who are not sinners, would come to Christ, Christ would get no glory from them. When the physician openeth his door for those who are sick, let me go there full of health; he can win no honour from me, because he cannot exert his skill upon me. The benevolent man may distribute all his wealth to the poor; but let some one go to him who has abundance, and he shall win no esteem from him for feeding the hungry, or for clothing the naked, since the applicant is neither hungry nor naked. A great sinner brings great glory to Christ when he is saved. II. Now, then, THE ENCOURAGEMENT. If this Man receiveth sinners, poor sin-sick sinner, what a sweet word this is for thee! Sure, then, He will not reject thee. Come, let me encourage thee this night to come to thy Master, to receive ~~the~~ great atonement, and to be clothed with all His righteousness. Mark, those whom I address are the *bonâ fide*, real, actual sinners, not the complimentary sinners, not those who say they are sinners by way of pacifying, as they suppose, the religionists of the day; but I speak to those who feel their lost, ruined, hopeless condition. Come, because He has said He will receive you. I know your fears; we all felt them once, when we were coming to Christ. Doth not this suffice thee? Then here is another reason. I am sure "this Man receiveth sinners," because He has received many, many before you. See, there is Mercy's door; mark how many have been to it; you can almost hear the knocks upon the door now, like echoes of the past. You may remember how many wayworn travellers have called there for rest, how many famished souls have applied there for bread. Go, knock at Mercy's door, and ask the porter this question, "Was there ever one applied to the door that was refused?" I can assure you of the answer: "No, not one." III. Now the last point is AN EXHORTATION. If it be true that Christ came only to save sinners, my beloved hearers, labour, strive, agonize, to get a sense in your souls of your own sinnership. (*Ibid.*) *Christ receives all*:—In the New Testament the Lord seems to have selected some of every kind and class to show that He will receive all. 1. He will receive the rich—Joseph of Arimathea. 2. The poor—Lazarus the beggar. 3. The learned—Dionysius the Areopagite. 4. Physicians—Luke. 5. Soldiers—the Roman centurion. 6. Fishermen—the apostles. 7. Extortioners—Zaccheus. 8. Tax-gatherers—Matthew. 9. Thieves—the dying robber. 10. Harlots—the woman who was a sinner. 11. Adulterers—the woman of Samaria. 12. Persecutors and murderers—Paul. 13. Backsliders—Peter. 14. Persons in trade—Lydia. 15. Statesmen and courtiers—the eunuch of Ethiopia. 16. Families—that at Bethany. 17. Whole multitudes—those on Day of Pentecost. (*Van Doren.*) *Christ's treatment of sinners*:—There are two classes of sins. There are some sins by which man crushes, wounds, malevolently injures his brother man: those sins which speak of a bad, tyrannical,

and selfish heart. Christ met those with denunciation. There are other sins by which a man injures himself. There is a life of reckless indulgence; there is a career of yielding to ungovernable propensities, which most surely conducts to wretchedness and ruin, but makes a man an object of compassion rather than of condemnation. The reception which sinners of this class met from Christ was marked by strange and pitying mercy. There was no maudlin sentiment on His lips. He called sin sin, and guilt guilt. But yet there were sins which His lips scourged, and others over which, containing in themselves their own scourge, His heart bled. That which was melancholy, and marred, and miserable in this world, was more congenial to the heart of Christ than that which was proudly happy. It was in the midst of a triumph, and all the pride of a procession, that He paused to weep over ruined Jerusalem. And if we ask the reason why the character of Christ was marked by this melancholy condescension, it is that He was in the midst of a world of ruins, and there was nothing there to gladden, but very much to touch with grief. He was here to restore that which was broken down and crumbling into decay. An enthusiastic antiquarian, standing amidst the fragments of an ancient temple surrounded by dust and moss, broken pillar, and defaced architrave, with magnificent projects in his mind of restoring all this to former majesty, to draw out to light from mere rubbish the ruined glories, and therefore stooping down amongst the dank ivy and the rank nettles; such was Christ amidst the wreck of human nature. He was striving to lift it out of its degradation. He was searching out in revolting places that which had fallen down, that He might build it up again in fair proportions a holy temple to the Lord. Therefore He laboured among the guilty; therefore He was the companion of outcasts; therefore He spoke tenderly and lovingly to those whom society counted undone. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *Christ's demeanour towards sinners*:—The heathen philosopher Seneca made a practice of dining with his slaves, and when challenged for an innovation so directly in the teeth of all customary proprieties and so offensive to the Roman mind, he defended himself by saying that he dined with some because they were worthy of his esteem, and with others that they might become so. The action and its defence was alike admirable, and read a salutary lesson to the aristocrats of Rome. But it was even a greater shock to the Pharisees, and if possible even more unaccountable, that Jesus should prefer the society of notorious sinners to their own irreproachable manners and decorous conversation. They could not understand why a teacher of holy life, instead of frowning upon the notoriously profligate, should show a preference for their society. Our Lord's explanation is ample and thorough. He devotes, therefore, the three parables recorded in this chapter to this purpose. It is perhaps worth remarking that on one point He felt that no explanation was required. Even the Pharisees did not suspect Him of any sympathy with sin. These critics of His conduct had not failed to remark that in His presence the daring profanity and audacious license of wicked men were tamed. Those who so narrowly criticized our Lord's conduct might have seen its reasonableness had they been able to look at it from another point of view. With equal surprise they might have exclaimed: "Sinners receive this Man and eat with Him." These dissolute and lawless characters could themselves have explained the change. They were attracted to Jesus, because together with unmistakable sanctity, and even somehow appearing as the chief feature of His sanctity, there was an understanding of the sinner's position and a hopefulness about him which threw a hitherto unknown spell over them. Separate from sinners, as they had never before felt any one to be, He seemed to come closer to their heart by far than any other had come. He had a heart open to all their troubles. He saw them through and through, and yet showed no loathing, no scorn, no astonishment, no perplexity, no weariness. Instead of meeting them with upbraiding and showing them all they had lost, He gave them immediate entrance into His own pure, deep, efficient love, and gladdened their hearts with a sense of what they yet had in Him. Therefore men whose seared conscience felt no other touch, who had a ready scoff for every other form of holiness, admitted this new power and yielded to it. The contrast between this new attitude of a holy person towards the sinner and that to which men had commonly been accustomed has been finely described in the following words: "He who thought most seriously of the disease held it to be curable; while those who thought less seriously of it pronounced it incurable. Those who loved their race a little made war to the knife against its enemies and oppressors; He who loved it so much as to die for it made overtures of peace to them. The

half-just judge punished the convicted criminal ; the thoroughly just judge offered him forgiveness. Perfect justice here appears to take the very course which would be taken by injustice." It is this, then, that calls for explanation. And it is explained by our Lord in three parables, each of which illustrates the fact that a more active interest in any possession is aroused by the very circumstance that it is lost. I. The first point, then, suggested by these parables is THAT GOD SUFFERS LOSS IN EVERY SINNER THAT DEPARTS FROM HIM. This was what the Pharisees had wholly left out of account, that God loves men and mourns over every ill that befalls them. And this is what we find it so hard to believe. II. Secondly, these parables suggest THAT THE VERY FACT OF OUR BEING LOST EXCITES ACTION OF A SPECIALLY TENDER KIND TOWARD US. God does not console Himself for our loss by the fellowship of those who have constantly loved Him. He does not call new creatures into being, and so fill up the blank we have made by straying from Him. He is not a Sovereign who has no personal knowledge of His subjects, nor an employer of labour who can always get a fresh hand to fill an emptied post : He is rather a Shepherd who knows His sheep one by one, a Father who loves His children individually. He would rather restore the most abandoned sinner than blot him from his place to substitute an archangel. Love is personal and settles upon individuals. It is not all the same to God if some other person is saved while you are not. These parables thus bring us face to face with the most significant and fertile of all realities—God's love for us. This love encompasses you whether you will or no. Love cannot remain indifferent or quiescent. Interference of a direct and special kind becomes necessary. The normal relations being disturbed, and man becoming helpless by the disturbance, it falls to God to restore matters. A new set of ideas and dealings are brought into play. So long as things go smoothly and men by nature love God and seek to do His will, there is no anxiety, no meeting of emergencies by unexpected effort, hidden resources, costly sacrifice. But when sin brings into view all that is tragic, and when utter destruction seems to be man's appointed destiny, there is called into exercise the deepest tenderness, the utmost power of the Divine nature. Here where the profoundest feeling of God is concerned, where His connection with His own children is threatened, Divinity is stirred to its utmost. This appears, among other things, in the spontaneity and persistence of the search God institutes for the lost. III. The third point illustrated by these parables is THE EXCEEDING JOY CONSEQUENT ON THE RESTORATION OF THE SINNER. "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance." The joy is greater, because the effort to bring it about has been greater, and because for a time the result has been in suspense, so that when the end is attained there is a sense of clear gain. The joy of success is proportioned to the difficulty, the doubtfulness of attaining it. All the hazards and sacrifices of the search are repaid by the recovery of the lost. The value of the unfallen soul may intrinsically be greater than the value of the redeemed ; but the joy is proportioned, not to the value of the article, but to the amount of anxiety that has been spent upon it. (*M. Dods, D.D.*) *The devil's castaways received by Christ :—*"Mr. Whitfield," said Lady Huntingdon, "these ladies have been preferring a very heavy charge against you. They say that in your sermon last night you made use of this expression : 'So ready is Christ to receive sinners who come to Him, that He is willing to receive the devil's castaways.'" Mr. Whitfield pleaded guilty to the charge, and told them of the following circumstance. "A wretched woman came to me this morning, and said : 'Sir, I was passing the door of your chapel, and hearing the voice of some one preaching, I did what I have never been in the habit of doing, I went in ! and one of the first things I heard you say was that Jesus would receive willingly the devil's castaways. Sir, I have been in the town for many years, and am so worn out in his service, that I may with truth be called one of the devil's castaways. Do you think that Jesus would receive me ?' I," said Mr. Whitfield, "assured her that there was not a doubt of it, if she was willing to go to Him." From the sequel it appeared that this was a case of true conversion, and Lady Huntingdon was assured that the woman left a very charming testimony behind her, that though her sins had been of a crimson hue, the atoning blood of Christ had washed them white as snow. *Publicans and sinners drawn to Christ ; or, the wisdom of gentleness :—*Rigorous courses hath ordinarily produced sad effects. Thou seest that those drops that fall easily upon the corn ripen and fill the ear, but the stormy showers that fall with violence beat the stalks down flat upon the earth, which being once laid, are afterwards kept down without

hope of recovery through weeds' embracements. Have you never known any that have been sent faulty to the jail who have returned flagitious and vile? (*N. Rogers.*) *The worst capable of much*:—White paper is made of dunghill rags. God can so work the heart of the vilest wretch with beating and purifying as it shall be fit to write His laws upon. (*Ibid.*) *Murmuring*:—Murmuring is a sin betwixt secret backbiting and open railing; a smothered malice which can neither utterly be concealed, nor dare openly be vented. Remedies against this evil: First, keep thy heart from pride, envy, passion, for from hence flows murmuring, malignity, whispering. Seldom do we murmur at those below us, but above us. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 3-7. What man of you, having an hundred sheep.—Lost, sought, found:—The three parables in this chapter fall into two sections, each setting forth separately one-half of a great truth, and both in combination exhibiting the whole. 1. The first two parables illustrate conversion on its Divine side. Christ had to seek these lost publicans and sinners in order to find them. 2. The third parable illustrates conversion on its human side, and was intended to imply that these publicans and sinners would never have been received by Christ unless they had sought Him. 3. The three parables combined illustrate conversion on both its Divine and human sides, and, consequently, the complete truth: God seeking man, and man seeking God; and the twofold search rewarded, by God and man finding each other. **I. LOST.** 1. In the first parable the loss falls mainly on what is lost. By sin (1) man loses himself; (2) man loses protection; (3) man loses comfort. 2. In the second parable the loss is sustained exclusively by the owner, and is considerable. One out of ten pieces. (1) The piece of silver was lost in the house, not in the street. (2) The piece of silver was lost to usefulness. 3. In the third parable we have a double loss. The nature and extent of the loss reach their climax here. Of two sons the father loses one—the loss of one-half as against the loss of one-tenth or one-hundredth. The son has only one father; and losing him he loses all. (1) Measure God's loss, as represented in this parable. Man is lost to Him not by death, but by depravity, which is far worse. (2) Consider man's loss. No possible compensation. The loss of God is the poverty, the forsakenness, the degradation, the bondage of the soul. **II. SOUGHT.** 1. In the first two parables the seekers are **DIVINE**. Let us endeavour to trace them. (1) The shepherd represents (a) the self-sacrificing seeker; (b) the persevering seeker. (2) The woman represents the careful and painstaking seeker. How suggestive of the minute and searching work of the Holy Spirit—Christ's fan and Christ's fire. 2. The seeker in the last parable is **HUMAN**, and it is just here that all experience, and the plan of salvation laid down in Scripture, would lead us to expect to find him, and exactly as here portrayed. Now we see where the other parables have been leading us, and to understand that their help is imperatively required. For notice—(1) Light dawns upon the prodigal and conviction pierces his soul. He passes through three preliminary states of experience as a lost man. First, danger and misery, when he begins to be in want; then uselessness and degradation, when he is sent into the fields to feed swine; and, finally, guilt, when he says, "I have sinned." (2) Hope now arises within his convinced and enlightened soul. How is this hope to be accounted for? Undoubtedly on the ground that the person he had sinned against was his *father*. But the moment it arose it would be confronted by a variety of opposing forces. The very thought of this filial relationship would summon before the memory the fact that it had been broken by an unpardonable outrage on a father's love. Conscience, again, would discourage the hope by urging the necessity of a now impossible reparation. And reason would finally tend to crush it by representing the folly of return now that having had, and having spent his portion, there was nothing to return for. It is well to remember all this. God is indeed our Father, and in that fact lies the sinner's hope to-day. But how much there is to hinder us from taking advantage of it! "God is my Father, but I have disowned Him. He has lavished His gifts upon me, but I have wasted them. What, then, can I expect but rejection if I return?" And yet the hope survives. The sinner still clings, and clings desperately, to the fact that God is his Father. Where did he get it from? Not from Nature, not by intuition, not through the deliverances of consciousness or the processes of deduction. From any one or all of these sources man may get his idea of God, but not his idea of a heavenly Father. No sinner ever said "My Father" until Christ taught him to do so. One voice, and one alone, has proclaimed this relationship, and thus formed the basis for the sinner's hope—namely, His who said: "No man cometh to the

Father but by Me." And to maintain this struggling hope against contending forces is the Good Shepherd's work. (3) The prodigal returns—the last stage, and the one without which all the others are traversed in vain. The strongest conviction of our sinfulness, the deepest remorse for it, and the clearest knowledge of the way out of it will avail nothing unless we arise and go to our Father. III. FOUND.

1. Notice the finding. The shepherd finds the sheep, the woman the piece of silver, the father and the son each other. Christ has found the sinner and done what He, as the Good Shepherd, alone could do, opened and revealed the way back to God, encouraged the sinner to return, and provided the basis of reconciliation. The Holy Spirit has found the sinner and done what He, as the careful and pains-taking Seeker, alone could do, wrought conviction and repentance. The sinner now does what neither Christ nor the Holy Spirit can do for him, but, with the help of both, finds the Father, to the peace and joy of his soul. The train of evangelical thought is now complete, and this trinity of parables made to illustrate the work of the Blessed Trinity in converting the sinner from the error of his way.

2. Notice the finding as it is regarded by heaven and earth. (1) The father receives the son with every demonstration of love and joy. (2) There is joy in the presence of the angels of God. And this joy is quite natural, for, first, the angels are perfectly pure and unselfish beings, and therefore spontaneously rejoice in the felicity of others. Then, again, they move eternally within that sphere the centre of which is the source of blessedness, and, therefore, delight to see wretched men brought into fellowship with the blessed God. And, lastly, much of their happiness consists in doing God's will. (3) All this, however, is in marked contrast with the conduct of the elder brother who "was angry and would not come in" to join in the general joy. He even repudiated the relationship of his brother, and contemptuously referred to him in his father's presence as "this *thy son*." He ventured to do what the father never did, threw the past in his teeth, and begrudged the hospitality which the poor starveling received. Who is this elder brother? Without question the Pharisee, either Jew or Christian. The men who stand aloof from their prodigal brethren, and who reproduce in our day the old, hard, sectarian, loveless spirit, are those who are here condemned. The man who revels in his father's bounty, who plumes himself on his own worthiness of it, who will not share it, is the elder brother and the Pharisee. (*J. W. Burn.*)

Lost and found.—I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES. 1. The scene. 2. The classes that were attracted by Jesus (ver. 1). 3. The classes that were not drawn to Jesus (ver. 2). Reputable and scrupulous, but fault-finding, narrow-minded, and bigoted. II. THE TWO PARABLES. 1. Characteristics common to both. (1) Lost souls. (2) A seeking Saviour. (3) The great joy which the recovery brings both to the heart of the Redeemer, and of all who truly love Him. 2. Characteristics peculiar to each. Lessons: 1. Character is tested by sentiment and sympathy. (1) The character of our Lord by His gracious sentiments and sympathies for the outcast and the most depraved. (2) The character of the Pharisees and scribes is seen in their fault-finding at Jesus for His loving sympathies for those whom they despised. 2. The real condition of mankind is revealed in these parables—Lost. 3. The nature of Christ's mission is here shown—To save. 4. The twofold method of salvation is here seen. (1) Christ's personal care. (2) Christ's work through the Church. 5. The universal sympathy and gladness over the salvation of souls is beautifully suggested. 6. How does our character stand this test? (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*)

Lost and found.—I. THE SINNER LOST. II. THE SINNER VALUED AND PITIED. III. THE SINNER SOUGHT. IV. THE SINNER FOUND AND RESCUED. V. THE SINNER RESTORED AND SAVED. VI. THE SINNER SAVED THE OCCASION OF HEAVENLY REJOICING. Conclusion: 1. Let the restored and saved give thanks to their Deliverer. 2. Let the spiritually lost accept, in penitence and faith, the tender and proffered ministrations of Christ. (*J. R. Thomson, M.A.*)

Third Sunday after Trinity.—I. NOTICE THE PICTURE THESE PARABLES PRESENT OF THE ORIGINAL PLAN AND ESTATE OF THE UNIVERSE. There was once a time when God was pleased with all that He had made, and when all His creatures were happy in Him. The universe was once one blessed flock, with the Lord as their Shepherd, all blessed in those sequestered realms which knew no blight or tumult of sinful disorder, and where everything was pervaded with innocence, tranquillity, and peace. A wilderness is not necessarily a desolate and empty place. Any wide, grassy plain, hidden away from the common world, and undisturbed in its quiet, would satisfy the Scriptural use of the word. Such were the favourite pasture-grounds of the Orientals, and such was the universe of holy beings ere sin had made it disturbing

inroads upon it. The starry plains were peopled only with unfallen creatures, secure, tranquil, and joyous in the smiles of their Maker. All rational beings were but one flock, and their shepherd was God. And the condition of man answered to this picture. He was as a new piece of silver, bright, precious, and bearing upon him the image and superscription of the Almighty. There was no darkness in his understanding, no perverseness in his heart, no fears, no regrets, no sighs, no pains, no dimness. II. BUT THIS BEAUTIFUL SCENE WAS SOON SUCCEEDED BY ANOTHER. A cloud arose upon the sweet morning of our world. One of the happy flock disappeared from its fellowship with its comrades. It was lost; wide-wandering from the Lord, in a world that smoked with curses and wretchedness. III. NOTICE, THEN, THE MOVEMENTS OF DIVINE COMPASSION FOR THE RECOVERY OF THE LOST. There was but one of a hundred gone. Ninety-and-nine remained. But precious in the eye of God is even one soul. It is a jewel capable of adding to the glory and grandeur of heaven. It is a radiant and living offshoot of Deity, capacitated to live and shine though stars should languish and expire. Though abused, prostituted, starved, and ruined by sin, it may still be made a part of the immortal intellect, heart and life of the universe. And its calamities are not of such a sort but that infinite Wisdom and Goodness has resources by which God can be just, and yet receive it again into His favour, the more interesting for ever because of this disaster. A plan of operation for its recovery has accordingly been instituted. And wonderful are the steps of the heavenly expedient. The Shepherd Himself goes after the lost sheep. He does not merely send servants to find it. He comes Himself. In this going forth is involved the incarnation and earthly life of the Lord Jesus Christ, and His whole providence in the Church, and through His word and sacraments. Or, to use the other figure, He lighteth a candle and personally searches every dark corner that He may come upon the lost piece which cannot help itself. This candle is the illuminating Word, which He causeth to shine around and upon us; and the sweeping which He does is the stir of His providence and Spirit, moving to touch the hearts of the unfortunate lost. In paradise already this candle was lit, when God gave promise of a coming Saviour; and all through and in His Church, in every age, this sweeping has been going on, and always for the finding of souls, and the bringing of them to light and salvation. With a thousand influences He plies men. He sends them the Word of His gospel. He stirs about their dark resting-places. He disturbs their guilty repose. He deprives them of their impure attachments. He makes them realize the evil and bitterness of departing from God. He takes hold upon them by the powers of His grace. He taketh up every willing one, to strengthen him with His help, and to beautify him with the sanctification of His Spirit. IV. NOTICE ALSO THE RESULT. The lost sheep is restored. The piece of silver is recovered. Or, exchanging the imagery of the parables for literal terms, the sinner is completely changed—returned from his alienated and lost condition—made a true penitent. This is the direct object of all the arrangements and ministrations of grace. V. AND WHEREVER THIS OCCURS THERE IS JOY. It is the end of gracious interference achieved. It is the fruit of the travail of the Saviour's soul realized. It is the aim of God's most wonderful works accomplished. And everything is full of gladness. "There is joy in heaven"; and the implication is that it is joy throughout heaven, from centre to circumference—joy on the throne, and joy in those who serve under it—joy in the heart of God, and among all the hosts of God—joy for Christ's sake, for the penitent's sake, for heaven's sake—joy that a broken link has been repaired in the holy creation of God—joy that another precious jewel has been added to the crown of redeeming love—joy that there is born another tenant for the mansions of glory—joy that another symptom has transpired of the ultimate recovery of all the down-trodden fields of creation which sin has overrun. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*) *The parable of the lost sheep*:—I. In the first place, I call attention to this observation: **THE ONE SUBJECT OF THOUGHT** to the man who had lost his sheep. This sets forth to us the one thought of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, when He sees a man lost to holiness and happiness by wandering into sin. The shepherd, on looking over his little flock of one hundred, can only count ninety-nine. This one idea possesses him: "a sheep is lost!" This agitates his mind more and more—"a sheep is lost." It masters his every faculty. He cannot eat bread; he cannot return to his home; he cannot rest while one sheep is lost. To a tender heart a lost sheep is a painful subject of thought. It is a sheep, and therefore utterly defenceless now that it has left its defender. And a sheep is of all creatures the most senseless, and the most shiftless. What is it which makes the Great

Shepherd lay so much to His heart the loss of one of His flock? What is it that makes Him agitated as He reflects upon that supposition—"if He lose one of them"? 1. I think it is, first, because of His property in it. The parable does not so much speak of a hired shepherd, but of a shepherd proprietor. "What man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them." The sheep are Christ's, first, because He chose them from before the foundations of the world—"Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." His, next, because the Father gave them to Him. How He dwells upon that fact in His great prayer in John xvii.: "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me"; "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am." We are the Lord's own flock, furthermore, by His purchase of us; He says, "I lay down My life for the sheep." This thought, therefore, presses upon Him, "One of My sheep is lost." 2. Secondly, He has yet another reason for this all-absorbing thought—namely, His great compassion for His lost sheep. The wandering of a soul causes Jesus deep sorrow; He cannot bear the thought of its perishing. Such is the love and tenderness of His heart that He cannot bear that one of His own should be in jeopardy. 3. Moreover, the man in the parable had a third relation to the sheep, which made him possessed with the one thought of its being lost—he was a shepherd to it. It was his own sheep, and he had therefore for that very reason become its shepherd; and he says to himself, "If I lose one of them my shepherd-work will be ill-done." What dishonour it would be to a shepherd to lose one of his sheep! II. Now we come to the second point, and observe **THE ONE OBJECT OF SEARCH**. This sheep lies on the shepherd's heart, and he must at once set out to look for it. 1. Observe here that it is a definite search. The shepherd goes after the sheep, and after nothing else; and he has the one particular sheep in his mind's eye. 2. An all-absorbing search. 3. An active search. 4. A persevering search. III. Now, we must pass on very briefly to notice a third point. We have had one subject of thought and one object of search; now we have **ONE BURDEN OF LOVE**. When the seeking is ended, then the saving appears—"When he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing." Splendid action this! How beautifully the parable sets forth the whole of salvation. Some of the old writers delight to put it thus: in His incarnation He came after the lost sheep; in His life He continued to seek it; in His death He laid it upon His shoulders; in His resurrection He bore it on its way, and in His ascension He brought it home rejoicing. Our Lord's career is a course of soul-winning, a life laid out for His people; and in it you may trace the whole process of salvation. But now, see, the shepherd finds the sheep, and he layeth it on his shoulders. 1. It is an uplifting action, raising the fallen one from the earth whereon he hath strayed. It is as though he took the sheep just as it was, without a word of rebuke, without delay or hesitancy, and lifted it out of the slough or the briars into a place of safety. 2. This laying on the shoulders was an appropriating act. He seemed to say, "You are my sheep, and therefore I lay you on my shoulders." 3. More condescending still is another view of this act: it was a deed of service to the sheep. The sheep is uppermost, the weight of the sheep is upon the shepherd. The sheep rides, the shepherd is the burden-bearer. The sheep rests, the shepherd labours. "I am among you as he that serveth," said our Lord long ago. 4. It was a rest-giving act, very likely needful to the sheep which could go no further, and was faint and weary. It was a full rest to the poor creature if it could have understood it, to feel itself upon its shepherd's shoulders, irresistibly carried back to safety. What a rest it is to you and to me to know that we are borne along by the eternal power and Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ! IV. We close by noticing one more matter, which is—**THE ONE SOURCE OF JOY**. This man who had lost his sheep is filled with joy, but his sheep is the sole source of it. His sheep has so taken up all his thought, and so commanded all his faculties, that as he found all his care centred upon it, so he now finds all his joy flowing from it. I invite you to notice the first mention of joy we get here: "When he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing." "That is a great load for you, shepherd!" Joyfully he answers, "I am glad to have it on my shoulders." The mother does not say when she has found her lost child, "Th's is a heavy load." No; she presses it to her bosom. She does not mind how heavy it is; it is a dear burden to her. She is rejoiced to bear it once again. "He layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing." Remember that text, "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame." (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Lost and found*.—I. **THE SINNER'S CONDITION**.—"Lost." The stray sheep and the missing silver are the emblems of every unrenowned soul. But

men refuse to lie under this imputation. In what do we differ from those whom you call Christians? they ask. We are as upright, honest, and generous as they. How are we lost? In what did the lost sheep of the parable differ from the ninety and nine in the fold? Not in appearance, but in condition. It was lost because it had wandered away from the shepherd. The missing piece of silver was coin of the realm, as well as the nine safe in the purse; but it was lost because it was out of its owner's reach. Sinners are lost, not because they are unlike other men, but because they are out of right relations to God. II. THE SINNER'S FRIEND. The fact that God makes any attempt to save lost men proves that He is the sinner's Friend. What has He to gain by the reclamation of the missing? He is not so poor that our restoration will greatly enrich Him. In comparison with the infinite expanse of His universe, this world is but a bubble of foam on the crest of an ocean surge. He has no lack of worshippers and servants. But these parables teach that there is still more of Divine affection in this search after the lost. III. THE SINNER'S RESCUE. God's plan of salvation is not a failure. It cost largely to make the redemption of the soul possible. Before the shepherd could come within reach of his wandering sheep, he must bruise and weary himself with his rough travel. Before God could lay the hand of help and healing on any man, the God-man must be despised and rejected, scourged, mocked, crucified. But none of these things stop the way; over them all and through them all the compassionate God presses on after His lost world "until He find it." IV. THE SINNER'S RETURN. "Rejoice with me." "Joy in the presence," &c. How happens it that there is such a contrast between the indifference of earth and the ecstasy of heaven? We here see things as they are in themselves; those yonder look at them in their relations. The conversion of a soul is not an isolated matter. It inevitably affects the character and condition of multitudes. (*E. S. Attwood.*) *The lost sheep*:—I. THE LOST SHEEP—THE SINNER. 1. Both act in the same manner. 2. Both share the same fate. II. THE GOOD SHEPHERD—JESUS CHRIST. 1. He possesses a numerous flock, as Creator and as Redeemer of mankind. 2. However numerous the flock may be, He is aware of every loss He sustains. (1) His solicitude for every one of His sheep knows no limits. (2) Being omniscient, He knows all the dangers that may befall the flock and any of the sheep. 3. He leaves the ninety-nine in the desert. (1) He does not leave them through carelessness, or without protection. (2) Our Saviour displayed a greater solicitude for the welfare of the sinner, because he is in peril of eternal ruin. 4. He goes after that which was lost until He finds it. (1) Christ goes after the sinner, warning and exhorting him by the voice of conscience, by inspirations, by the kindness with which He received sinners when He dwelt visibly among them, by His whole life, passion, and death. (2) Christ searches for the lost sinner, following him over the abysses, through thorns, over mountains. He searches until He finds him, or until it has become impossible to find him, because he is lost, because of final obduracy. 5. And when He has found the sheep, when the sinner does not refuse to seize the hand extended towards him—(1) He lays it upon His shoulders, facilitating the beginning of conversion by imparting abundant graces, so that the sinner is rather carried than proceeds himself. (2) He carries the sheep home to partake again of the communion of saints. (3) He rejoices, and makes His friends and neighbours rejoice with Him. (*Repertorium Oratoris Sacri.*) *Parable of the lost sheep*:—I. THE ENDANGERED WANDERER. Man has wandered—1. From the authority of God. 2. From the family of God. 3. In the way of peril and death. 4. The sinner would wander endlessly, but for the intervention of Divine grace. II. THE KINDLY SHEPHERD. 1. He compassionated man in his fallen and ruined condition. 2. He actually came to seek the wanderer. 3. When found He restores him. III. THE JOYOUS RESULTS. 1. The Shepherd rejoices in the attainment of His gracious purposes. 2. Angels rejoice. 3. The restored wanderer rejoices. 4. All spiritual persons acquainted with the sinner's restoration rejoice. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *The lost sheep brought home*:—I. THE SINNER'S NATURAL CONDITION. 1. In want. 2. In danger. 3. Helpless. II. THE CONDUCT OF CHRIST TOWARDS THE SINNER. 1. He misses him. 2. He seeks him. 3. He finds him. 4. He bears him home. III. THE FEELING WITH WHICH THE GREAT SHEPHERD OF THE CHURCH CARRIES ON THIS BLESSED WORK. Not pity, compassion, kindness, nor yet love; but joy, and joy overflowing: joy so great that the Divine mind cannot hold it, but must call upon the whole creation to come and share its abundance. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *The lost sheep*:—This is one of those parables which, by its simplicity, presents the full tenderness of the gospel message to mankind, gathered, as it were, into a strong focus of emphasis. I. THE HIGH ESTIMATE

ENTERTAINED, ON THE PART OF JEHOVAH, OF THE SOUL OF MAN. In the narrative of the sheep, the shepherd is represented as thinking with greater anxiety of the *one* straying from his flock, than of the ninety-nine who are safe under his eye. He feels sure of them, and quits them without apprehension, intent rather upon the restoration of the one than upon the preservation of the many. We are not to presume that Christ withdraws His care and His regard from His own people in His anxiety to add more to His fold. He has never left His true disciples comfortless; but "the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost," abides with them always. But the Saviour, when He spoke this parable, wanted to show that His heart was large enough to love, and His fold was wide enough to hold, both the flock already gathered and the sheep which had wandered away. II. Look, secondly, at an expansion of the same idea in THE TENDERNESS OF THE SHEPHERD IN BRINGING BACK THE SHEEP THAT WAS LOST. It was passing kind to bring it back at all; but what a depth of kindness is there in the manner of that bringing back! "When he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders." Oh, my friends, what touching tenderness is here! a tenderness "passing the love of woman." Have you not often seen a mother chase a wayward child, and when she overtakes it, seize it with a petulant clutch, and almost drag it back to the door of the cottage, chiding and sometimes chastising it the whole way? But there is no upbraiding here. The wanderer has no excuse. He has been ungrateful; he has broken down the fences which love had built for his security; he has despised the guardianship which would have shielded him, he has been obdurate under the mildness which would have gently governed him; he has quarrelled with the fare which sovereign bounty had provided him. But there are none of these things flung sternly in his teeth. There is no anger in the Shepherd's eye. It is *all* pity. III. Now look at THE GREATNESS AND COMPLETENESS OF THE RESTORATION. "I have found that which was lost." "Found" and "lost," these are the two contrasting words, and their meaning is unspeakable. What a losing! What a finding! It is a rescue from perdition. Not a mere human estimate of being lost, but God's estimate. And there is a difference between the two ideas as vast and wide as the difference between the finite and the infinite. We deem it no small thing to lose the valuable purchase of years of anxiety and toil; but what must be Christ's estimate of His own loss, when He feels that He has lost the purchase of His blood, His pleading, and His prayers; that human infatuation has actually torn itself away from the embrace of Calvary; and that the coinage of the Cross—the wealth that poured, stamped with a Saviour's crown of thorns, from Mercy's mint—is cast aside for nought! And what must be the sinner's estimate of his own perdition, when from its darkest depths he feels its cruellest curse, and has only light enough to see to count the priceless sum at which his soul was bought, but which he has contemned, and scorned, and flung away! IV. THE REJOICINGS WHICH GREET THE SHEPHERD'S RETURN WITH HIS SHEEP. His heart is too full to keep the gladness to himself. There is such chainless ecstasy thrilling in his soul that he must have all his friends about him to help him in his triumphant celebration. "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost." What condescension is there in this sympathy! Oh could we but gauge the satisfaction with which Jesus will look upon "the travail of His soul," then we should know something of the depth of the love with which He loves us. But the ocean is too wide for our gaze to see the further shore, it is too deep for our poor plummet to fathom. We cannot know the bitterness of the cup He drank to the foul dregs; we cannot feel the agony which the sleeping disciples might not watch, when the drops of blood were sweat upon the ground; we cannot tell the galling stab of nail and thorn and spear, nor lift the weight of the rough, crushing cross. No; we cannot understand the huge encyclopædia of Calvary, nor study to the full profundity of its melting lore the lexicon of dying love; and so we cannot measure out the joy with which the purchase of that death will be received, and the trophies of that tragedy be counted up. But we shall be allowed to share in it! Not only shall we be rejoiced over, but we shall rejoice over others. (*A. Mursell.*) *The lost sheep:*—Never forget that the whole drama of Redemption—the Incarnation, the Ministry, the Cross, the Resurrection, the Ascension—was all but one long search for the lost sheep, and carrying it home rejoicing. The whole race of man was the lost sheep until Christ found it. All we like sheep had gone astray.

"All the souls that are were forfeit once,
And He who might the vantage best have took,
Found out the remedy."

Other sheep were His—millions of spiritual creatures thronging the heaven of heavens. But here was this atom-world, floating on the infinite bosom of the bright and boundless air, the ruined habitation of a fallen race. To this poor ruined atom-world He came down all these steps of the infinite descent. Why? Because God is love. I. LET US ALL BE PITIFUL. As for sin, indeed, we cannot hate it too much. But for the sinner we should feel nothing but compassion. II. LET NONE DESPAIR. None has sinned too deeply to be forgiven. Come to Christ with your burden. There is heavenly medicine; there is lustral water at the wicket gate. III. THINK NOBLE THOUGHTS OF GOD. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *The lost sheep*:—I. There is, first, God's YEARNING OVER THE SINNER. Usually, in depicting a lost sinner, we dwell on the miseries which he has brought upon himself, and the blessings which he himself has forfeited. But this and the succeeding parables differ from the ordinary representations of the subject, in that they set before us the loss which God has sustained in the wandering and rebellion of His children. This view of the matter may well give careless sinners food for serious reflection. You are God's. By virtue of your very creaturehood you belong to Him. Your hearts, your lives, your service, ought all to be given to Him; but they are not, and this is no mere thing of indifference to Him. He misses you. He, on whom the universe hangs, and who might well be excused if He had no concern for you, misses your love. He hungers for your affection. Yea, He has used means of the most costly character to find you out, and to bring you back. Why will you continue to disregard Him? II. But, in the second place, we have here set before us THE SINNER'S OWN HELPLESSNESS. He is like a lost sheep. Now, while, as we have seen, this means that God has lost him, we must not forget that, on the other side of it, the analogy also bears that the sinner has lost himself. There are few more helpless creatures than a wandered sheep. It is, comparatively speaking, an easy thing to convince the sinner of his guilt, but it is a hard matter to get him to own his helplessness. He will persist in attempting his own deliverance. He will seek to satisfy God's law for himself, and to find his own way back to happiness. The sheep will run to the shepherd when he appears, and welcome him as its helper, looking up in dumb gratitude into his face. But the sinner, in this respect more stupid even than the sheep, too often runs from the Shepherd and will have none of His assistance. III. We have here, in the third place, THE MEANS USED FOR THE SINNER'S RECOVERY. All the way from heaven to Calvary Jesus came to seek lost sinners. He was going after that which was lost when He sat by the well of Sychar, and conversed with the woman of Samaria; when He called Matthew in His toll-booth, and when He summoned Zaccheus from the branch of the sycamore-tree whereon he was perched. He was going after that which was lost when He shed forth His Spirit upon Pentecost, and inspired His servants to proclaim His truth with power; and He is still going after that which is lost in the events of His providence, whereby He rouses the careless to reflection; in the searching words of His earnest ministers, who stately declare His love, and speak home to the hearts of their fellow-men; and in the strivings of His spirit, whereby, often when they can give no account of the matter, men's minds are strangely turned in the direction of salvation. But we must hasten on to describe the finding. When, it may be asked, is a sinner found by Christ? The answer is, When, on his side, the sinner finds Christ. What is seen in heaven is Christ laying His loving hand upon the sinner, and the angels hear Him, saying—"I have found that which was lost"; but what is seen on earth, is the sinner laying his believing hand on Christ, and men hear him crying—"I have found my Deliverer. I will go with Him, for salvation is with Him." But these are not two distinct things—they are involved the one in the other, so that you cannot take the one from the other without destroying both. But there is yet another aspect of this finding which must in nowise be lost sight of. I mean the tenderness of the shepherd. IV. THE JOY MANIFESTED BY GOD OVER THE SINNER'S RETURN. The home-coming here can hardly be identical with the finding of the lost one. It must rather, I think, be understood of the introduction of the saved one into heaven, by Jesus, at the last. Yet the joy over him is not delayed till then, though at that moment it becomes higher than before. Let me illustrate. You have lost your child, and one of the most trusted members of your family has set out in search of her. He is long away, and weary days and weeks you wait for news. At length, however, there comes from the great city a telegram from the seeker, saying that he has found his sister, and that he is making arrangements for bringing her home as soon as possible. Of course, the mere receipt of this message gives you joy; but when at

length your loved one is brought home, that joy is intensified, and you call together your friends to celebrate with you her return. Now, your gladness at the receipt of the telegram corresponds to the joy in heaven over the sinner's repentance, while your higher joy at the home-coming of your child is symbolical of the gladness which will be caused by the entrance into heaven of each new ransomed spirit. Nor need we wonder at this joy. It is over a successful enterprise. It is over the deliverance of another soul from ruin. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*)

The Good Shepherd in three positions:—Let us behold our great Shepherd—I. **IN THE SEARCH.** "Until He find it." 1. No rejoicing is on His countenance. He is anxious for the lost. 2. No hesitation is in His mind. Despite roughness of way, length of time, or darkness of night, He still pursues His lost one. 3. No anger is in His heart. The many wanderings of the sheep cost Him dear, but He counts them as nothing, so that He may but find it. 4. No pausing because of weariness. Love makes Him forget Himself, and causes Him to renew His strength. 5. No giving up the search. His varied non-successes do not compel Him to return defeated. Such must our searches after others be. We must labour after each soul until we find it. II. **AT THE CAPTURE.** "When He hath found it." Mark the Shepherd when the sheep is at last within reach. 1. Wanderer held. How firm the grip! How hearty! How entire! 2. Weight borne. No chiding, smiting, driving; but a lift, a self-loading, an easing of the wanderer. 3. Distance travelled. Every step is for the Shepherd. He must tread painfully all that length of road over which the sheep had wandered so wantonly. The sheep is carried back with no suffering on its own part. 4. Shepherd rejoicing to bear the burden. The sheep is so dear that its weight is a load of love. The Shepherd is so good that He finds joy in His own toil. 5. Sheep rejoicing, too. Surely it is glad to be found of the Shepherd, and so to have its wanderings ended, its weariness rested, its distance removed, its perfect restoration secured. III. **IN THE HOME-BRINGING.** "When He cometh home." 1. Heaven is home to Christ. 2. Jesus must carry us all the way there. 3. The Shepherd's mission for lost souls is known in glory, and watched with holy sympathy: in this all heavenly ones are "his friends and neighbours." 4. Jesus loves others to rejoice with Him over the accomplishment of His design. "He called together His friends." See how they crowd around Him! What a meeting! 5. Repentance is also regarded as our being brought home (see verse 7). 6. One sinner can make all heaven glad: (see verses 7, 10). (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Saving the lost:—The sinner is set forth in the parable as a silly, wandering sheep. And it suggests what is true—that sin is not always a matter of premeditation. Sin is oftentimes an ignorance, a misunderstanding, a darkness of mind. A young man does not at eighteen say, "Now I will waste my time and squander my money, ruin my health, and hurt as many by my influence as I can." That is not the way the thing is done. It would not be true to so represent it, any more than it would have been true for Christ to have represented the sheep as getting together in one corner of the fold, and saying, "Now let us get out and run off into the woods, and get bitten by wolves, and be killed." Neither sheep nor men act in that way. Men wander off—they get led astray—they get farther away from virtue than they ever expected to be—they are lost before they know it. Looking at him from one point of view, the sinner is to be condemned; looking at him from another, he is to be pitied. In this latter light it is that the parable presents him to us. My friends, let us catch the spirit of the Saviour, as we go in and out among men. Men are like ice. You can melt them sooner by being warm toward them, by centring the rays of a great, earnest, glowing love upon them, than by going at them with hammers of threat and warning, and trying to beat them down and pulverize them. Sandstone kind of men can be treated in that way; but when you hit a man in that style made of granite, the hammer recoils, to the injury of the palm that held it. June is better than December to quicken life and growth in the natural world; and if you want people to blossom and get fruitful spiritually, pour around them the warm, genial atmosphere of God's penetrative and stimulative love. My people, refresh your memories to-day with the real object of Christ's incarnation. He did not come to publish certain sublime truths. He did not come to found a Church, to build up a religious hierarchy, to introduce habits of prayer, and peculiar views of God and duty. He came absorbed, rather, with one thought—devoted to one sublime, unselfish mission. It was to go after His lost sheep. This yearning, this irrepressible desire, it was, which burned and glowed in His whole life, as the pure fire glows in the diamond. This it was which gave fervour and intense beauty to His

life. Before Christ came, who cared for the lost? Who cares for the bleaching bone in the wilderness?—it may be the bone of an ox, or a dog, or a man; who cares which? It is a dry and lifeless bone, and nothing more. It has no connection with our beating flesh, no relation with our living thought. Who cares for the shell on the shore? The waves have heaved it up from the caverns of the deep, and ground it into the sand: there let it lie. What hunter cares for the scattered feathers which some fierce hawk has torn from the back and breast of its prey? Why mourn over a bunch of soiled plumage? Had the hunter seen the hawk pounce on it, he might, perchance, have shot the hawk, and spared the bird; but the bird is lost. Why look? why mourn? why care? So little man cared for man before Christ came. The life of Christ was wonderful, because it was full of deeds nobody else had ever done. His very sympathies were a revelation. Ask Him as He rises from His agonizing prayer in the garden, when a thicker darkness than subsequently draped the earth lies on His soul; and He says again, "I came to save the lost." Ask Him as he sinks fainting beneath the cross; and amid His panting are shaped the selfsame words—"To save the lost." Ask Him as He hangs on the cross itself, about to yield up the ghost; and His quivering lips reply, "I came to save the lost; and here My task is finished." We are like vases of rare tint and exquisite workmanship, which, shattered by some violent stroke, have been regathered in all their fragments, and so carefully rejoined, and glued with transparent cement, that no eye can detect where were the lines of rupture. The seeking love of God found us in fragments, and made us over into a perfect whole. If any of you have children, or friends, or relatives, far away from God, widely wandering from the truth of statement and life, I trust you will not be discouraged. Hope and pray always. Die as you have lived, hoping and praying. Build your hope on the seeking love of Christ. Ally your life with His in this work. Help reform society; help reform the Church, so that people shall not stare and look astonished when a really bad man or wicked woman is saved—when a soul that has in very fact been lost, and which was found in its sins as a lamb found in some dark, stony gorge, nearly dead from exposure and wounds, is brought to the fold. (*W. H. H. Murray.*)

The danger of the soul astray:—One soul, gone astray, is in greater danger than the rest. It has fallen, first from creation, and then from redemption. It has fallen from its Divine acceptance, both in the first Adam and in the second. It is "twice dead." "The last state of that man is worse than the first." "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance." There is no second "baptism for the remission of sins." That one lost soul is in the way which leads beyond the boundaries of grace. Every day brings it nearer to the fatal brink. Dangers are ever thickening; temptation waxing mightier; sins are hourly multiplied; the dye is daily blacker; life is fast wearing away, eternity fast coming on; therefore the Good Shepherd speeds apace with a hasty step, to find that one sheep which is lost. (*H. E. Manning.*)

Search prompted by love:—Following the law of love, He seems to leave the faithful, that He may seek for sinners. As there is a fold in heaven, so there is a fold on earth, a visible fold—the Church, in which He gathers His lost sheep. There is, besides, within that visible fold, another fold unseen, His own encircling Presence, the circuit of His own watchful care, within which the faithful and obedient are securely sheltered. These are they who walk steadfast in baptismal purity. They keep close to the eye and to the pathway of their Lord, going in and out by the gates of obedience. These are the ninety and nine who keep close to the feet of the Good Shepherd. For a while He passes them by, that He may seek sinners who, after baptism, fall from grace. For many are they who go out of this inward fold. They go out into ways of this world, the tangled masses of this wilderness, losing themselves by losing sight of Him; and, by losing sight of Him, losing their own souls. What is this wilderness but sin? Every several sin that man commits is a wilderness to that man's soul, whether it be a sin of the flesh, as lust, gluttony, excess; or a sin of the spirit, as inward impurity, pride, anger, hardness of heart, sloth, or falsehood—whatever it be, that sin is a wilderness in each man's soul, in which he is lost. For sin raises a cloud between the soul and the gaze of the Good Shepherd's face. The sinner closes the eye which guides him; he loses the light of that countenance which shone upon the track of life. His will breaks away from the will of our Divine Guide, by which will he was sanctified; for so long as His will

and our will are united, we are drawn by a thread of gold, which leads us in the way of life; but when, by sin, we start back and snap asunder that guiding clue, we are straightway lost. (*Ibid.*) *The sheep that was lost and found*.—I. THE NATURALNESS OF GOD'S SEARCH FOR THE SINNER. "What man of you," saith Christ, with that touch of surprise that we so often trace when He found men blind to truths that seemed to Him clear as day, "having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost?" What else could he do? What could be more natural? He would be certain to go; his duty, his thought of loss to himself, his affection for the animal he had so long taken care of, his thought of all the poor thing was suffering, all would urge him forth. The inference followed, none could mistake it, that God would do the same for His erring and lost children, that He could not do otherwise, that to do otherwise would be unnatural. A similar relation to that which the shepherd bore the sheep, God bears to men. Let one of them lose himself, and it would be impossible for God to rest till He found the lost one. Duty, if I may use the term, the inward, self-created imperative, by which God must be true to Himself, would urge Him forth. II. THE PERSEVERANCE OF GOD. We are told a great deal about God being wearied out with us, and so offended with our wrongdoing as to give up trying to make us better. That is not Christ's doctrine about God. In His mind He saw the Father going after the lost sheep unweariedly, and never, never resting till He found it and brought it home. Only when it was laid to sleep in the fold could God's perseverance of love take any rest. There is no pause in God's work till He find us. It is God who will find us, and not we Him, and He will never rest till we are laid on His strong shoulder, and understand His love, and rest in His peace. No, not if it takes half an eternity to find us, will He give up the search. The law of God has made it plain that He will not find us in this comforting way till we repent, and the greater part of His search consists in so working on our lives as to make us cry with the prodigal, "I will arise and go to my Father." And that is severe and punishing work. III. THE JOY OF GOD IN REDEMPTION. It is pleasant, when we think how easily we get tried, to consider this unweariness of God, and that however long He persevere, His interest cannot be exhausted by pursuit or by success. Pursuit is agreeable enough to us, for as long as a thing is unreachd it charms, but our dangerous moment is the moment of success. When we have laid our hand on the goal, if it be pleasure, we too often give it a languid assent; if it be the good of another, we are too often so weary as not to be interested any longer. That is the weakness of our mortal nature. It is nothing to be proud of, as some think. It is want of power, of imagination, of capacity. Were we greater in heart and brain, victory of pleasure, success in good would double our joy. An infinite nature has infinite delight and interest. The joy of God in redeeming the lost is, then, the last truth the parable teaches. It is frank, complete, ungrudging, unmixed. (*Stopford A. Brooke, M.A.*) *The shepherd misses one when it has strayed from the flock*.—The Redeemer's knowledge is infinite; He looks not only over the multitude generally, but into each individual. When I stand on a hillock at the edge of a broad meadow, and look across the sward, it may be said in a general way that I look on all the grass of that field; but the sun in the sky looks on it after another fashion—shines on every down-spike that protrudes from every blade. It is thus that the Good Shepherd knows the flock. Knowing all, He misses any one that wanders. He missed a world when it fell, although His worlds lie scattered like grains of golden dust on the blue field of Heaven—the open infinite. (*W. Arnot.*) *God mindful of the unit*.—Next, much comfort may be gathered from this point in hand. Though the godly are but few, yet (we see) God will be nevertheless mindful of them. If but one sheep go astray, He will fetch it home; if but one goat lost, He will look it up; if but one sinner repents, there shall be joy in heaven for him; if but one prodigal come home, he shall be received. With man it is otherwise; who will bestow gathering of one apple upon some top bough, or send a reaper into a field for one ear of wheat standing in some corner of it? Or what husbandman will beat over his straw again for one grain of corn, or winnow over all his chaff for a few grains of wheat? But God will not lose an apple, not an ear, not one kernel; He will winnow a great heap for a few grains, as He did the old world for eight (Gen. vii. 7; 1 Pet. iii. 20). And it is no rare thing, but often seen that God sends many of His servants to thresh or winnow in great assemblies of chaff, and yet after diverse years' pains and sore sweating labour, they get but one grain of corn. After all their toil they convert but one or two souls, whom

God in His providence hath sent them, by all their pains to save. (*N. Rogers.*) *Christ seeking the lost*:—No place did He leave unsought to find His own; in the wilderness we see here He seeks the sheep; in the house, as we read in the next, He seeks the groat; in the world He seeks up the prodigal and lost son. He goes to Samaria to seek the woman; to Bethany to seek up Mary; to Capernaum to seek the centurion; to Jericho to seek Zaccheus; no place that He left unsought or unsanctified. (*Ibid.*)

Christ's sympathy for sinners:—1. A yearning sympathy. 2. An active sympathy. 3. A tender sympathy. 4. A joyful sympathy. (*C. E. Walker.*) *The tendency to wander*:—There is in sin a centrifugal tendency, and the wanderings of this wanderer could be only further and further away. If, therefore, it shall be found at all, this can only be by its Shepherd's going to seek it; else, being once lost, it is lost for ever. (*Archbishop Trench.*)

No instinct to return:—The sinner is like the strayed sheep, the most stupid of animals. The cat, the dog, the horse, when lost, find their way home—who knows how?—but the sheep has no such instinct. (*J. Wells.*) *Tact in teaching*:—How easily they all understood Him! But how few Christian people there are who understand how to fasten the truths of God and religion to the souls of men. Truman Osborne, one of the evangelists who went through this country some years ago, had a wonderful art in the right direction. He came to my father's house one day, and while we were all seated in the room, he said, "Mr. Talmage, are all your children Christians?" Father said, "Yes, all but De Witt." Then Truman Osborne looked down into the fireplace, and began to tell a story of a storm that came on the mountains, and all the sheep were in the fold; but there was one lamb outside that perished in the storm. Had he looked me in the eye, I should have been angered when he told that story; but he looked into the fireplace, and it was so pathetically and beautifully done, that I never found any peace until I was sure I was inside the fold, where the other sheep are. (*De Witt Talmage, D.D.*)

God seeking after men:—The distinction between Christianity and all other systems of religion consists largely in this: that in these others men are found seeking after God, while Christianity is God seeking after men. (*T. Arnold, D.D.*) *Seeking a lost sheep*:—One evening in 1861, as General Garibaldi was going home, he met a Sardinian shepherd lamenting the loss of a lamb out of his flock. Garibaldi at once turned to his staff, and announced his intention of scouring the mountain in search of the lamb. A grand expedition was organized. Lanterns were brought, and old officers of many a campaign started off full of zeal to hunt the fugitive. But no lamb was found, and the soldiers were ordered to their beds. The next morning Garibaldi's attendant found him in bed fast asleep. The attendant waked him. The general rubbed his eyes; and so did his attendant when he saw the old warrior take from under the covering the lost lamb, and bid him convey it to the shepherd. The general had kept up the search through the night until he had found it. Even so doth the Good Shepherd go in search of His lost sheep until He finds them. (*Sunday School Times.*)

Tenderness of the Good Shepherd:—Among the hills of our native land I have met a shepherd far from the flocks and folds, driving home a lost sheep—one which had "gone astray," a creature panting for breath, amazed, alarmed, footsore; and when the rocks around rang loud to the baying of the dogs, I have seen them, whenever it offered to turn from the path, with open mouth dash fiercely at its sides, and so hound it home. How differently Jesus brings back His lost ones! The lost sheep sought and found, He lifts it up tenderly, lays it on His shoulder, and retracing His steps, returns homeward with joy, inviting His neighbours to rejoice with Him. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *Seeking the lost*:—A lady, while passing along one of our public streets, in pulling off her glove, pulled from her finger a very valuable jewelled ring, which, before she could secure it, rolled into the gutter. She stood hesitatingly on the brink of the filthy puddle for a few moments, as if considering what to do, when she bared her fair arm, and plunging her hand into the gutter, secured her treasure. Ah! there is the treasure of the precious soul lost in many a vile sink of human pollution, and to save it we must be willing to follow the Saviour's example, and to go to the vilest outcasts with the glad tidings of salvation. From the parable of the lost sheep we are impressed with the thought of the Saviour's deep personal interest in every sinner. One sheep went astray, and this careful Shepherd missed even that one. The sinner, in his wanderings, is apt to think that Christ does not notice him; that amid the vastness of the affairs of the universe which occupy the Divine mind, he, if not overlooked, is but little attended to. But this is a dangerous mistake. There is not a step which the sinner can take in his departure from God

which the watchful eye of the Shepherd does not follow; and the loved child is not more surely missed from the affectionate family circle than is every sinner who departs from the living God. (*J. R. Boyd.*) *One sheep against "ninety and nine":*—A traveller describes a scene which he once saw that strongly reminded him of this parable: "On the Aletsch glacier I saw a strange, a beautiful sight—the parable of our Lord reacted in the letter. One day we were making our way with ice-axe and alpenstock down the glacier, when we observed a flock of sheep following their shepherd over the intricate windings of the crevasses, and so passing from the pastures on one side of the glacier to the pastures on the other. The flock had numbered two hundred, all told. But on the way one sheep had got lost. One of the shepherds, in his German patois, appealed to us if we had seen it. Fortunately one of the party had a field-glass. With its aid we discovered the lost sheep far up, amid a tangle of brushwood, on the rocky mountain side. It was beautiful to see how the shepherd, without a word, left his hundred and ninety-nine sheep on the glacier waste (knowing they would stand there perfectly still and safe), and went clambering back after the lost sheep until he found it." *In search of stray sheep:*—Uncle John Vassar, the celebrated colporteur of the American Tract Society, who tramped the country over from Illinois to Florida, used to describe himself as the "Shepherd's Dog." He did not claim to be a shepherd, for he put great power upon an educated and ordained ministry. He regarded himself only as a faithful dog, hunting after the stray sheep of the Master's flock, and endeavouring to bring into the fold those Christless souls who were wandering over the devil's commons. A young clergyman says that he once overtook Uncle John Vassar on the road (in Dutchess county), and made some inquiry as to the residence of a friend. Uncle John gave him the information, and then promptly inquired, "My young friend, are you a Christian?" The ministerial brother told him that he hoped he was. A few words more passed, and Vassar pushed on, remarking that "he was in a hurry to look up some sheep." When the clergyman reached his friend's house, he told them that he had met a crazy man on the road, who was hunting after sheep. The family laughed heartily, and said, "Why, that was John Vassar, our Dutchess county missionary, and the sheep that he is in search of are the Lord's." *Anxieties of pastoral care:*—St. Francis, reflecting on a story he heard of a mountaineer in the Alps, who had risked his life to save a sheep, says, "O God, if such was the earnestness of this shepherd in seeking for a mean animal, which had probably been frozen on the glacier, how is it that I am so indifferent in seeking my sheep?" *Seeking the wanderer:*—An American bishop, speaking of the personal love and earnestness which in Christian work prove, with God's blessing, so successful, related that a youth belonged to a Bible-class, but at last the time came when he thought fit to discontinue his attendance, and to otherwise occupy his time. The class assembled, but his place was empty, and the leader looked for the familiar face in vain. He could not be content to conduct the Bible-reading as usual, ignorant as to the condition and whereabouts of the missing one. "Friends," he said, "read, sing, and pray; my work is to seek and find a stray sheep;" and he started off on the quest. "The stray sheep is before you," said the bishop to his hearers. "My teacher found me, and I could not resist his pleading; I could not continue to wander and stray whilst I was sought so tenderly." (*The Quiver.*) *Until he find it:*—The Saviour does not go after the wandering sheep for a mile or so in the wilderness, and then, because the way is wet or weary, or because the clouds of evening are gathering, say to Himself, "Well, I have done as much as this ridiculous and stupid sheep deserves. There was no occasion that the sheep should wander away from the fold. It is its own folly. Let it reap the fruit of its own folly. I have done all I can; I will go home now." Not at all. He goes on and on and on. He does not consider how tired He is. He has not done His business until He has found the sheep and put it on His shoulder, and brought it back again rejoicing. (*H. P. Hughes, M.A.*) *Search for soul-jewels:*—A jeweller received a very valuable diamond to be re-set. He wrapped it up carefully, and laid it away; but, when it was wanted, it could not be found. Its loss would ruin the jeweller. He searched everywhere; day after day, doing nothing else till he found it. At last he discovered a bit of the paper, in which the jewel had been wrapped, among the ashes of a fireplace. He then sifted all the ashes made after reception of the jewel, and was overjoyed to discover the lost treasure perfectly uninjured. What diligent search, then, should be made for lost but immortal soul-jewels! *Rejoicing:*—*Christ's joy in saving sinners:*—**L. CHRIST'S ANXIETY TO SAVE THE LOST. 1. He knows the sinners'**

present condition. (1) Destitution. (2) Peril. (3) Feebleness. No strength apart from Christ. 2. He adopts active means for the sinner's recovery. (1) He seeks. (2) He finds. II. HIS JOY OVER THEIR SALVATION. 1. This joy is represented by the shepherd laying the lost sheep upon his shoulder, and carrying it home rejoicing. We know why the shepherd acts thus. The sheep is wearied and distressed by its wanderings. If let loose, it might again escape and wander farther than ever from the fold. If it were allowed to walk by the shepherd's side, it might be devoured by beasts, who are watching for their prey even in the shepherd's presence. You must all see from this representation how safe you, the redeemed of Christ, are. 2. But Jesus not only rejoices Himself in your salvation, He also calls upon the angels of heaven to participate in His joy. APPLICATION: 1. Warning to the indifferent. 2. Comfort to the penitent. (*Canon Clayton.*) *Christian joy at a sinner's conversion*:—About three hundred years after the time of the apostles, Caius Marius Victorius, an old pagan, was converted from his impiety, and brought over to the Christian faith; and when the people of God heard this, there was a wonderful rejoicing, and shouting, and leaping for gladness, and psalms were sung in every church, while the people joyously said one to another, "Caius Marius Victorius is become a Christian! Caius Marius Victorius is become a Christian!" Dear reader, it may be that you are an old offender. What joy would be made among the best of people by your conversion! Some of your dearest friends would be ready to dance with delight; and hundreds, who know what a hardened rebel you have been, would sing and shout for joy of heart, "Old — has become a Christian!" Oh, that you might be led to cause this happiness on earth; and there is this at the back of it—the holy mirth would reach to the highest heaven! (*G. H. Spurgeon.*) *Joy of a community in recovering the lost*:—The following anecdote was told to Dr. J. Todd by an old hunter in the forests of America: "I had been out all winter alone trapping for furs. It was in March, when I was hunting beaver, just as the ice began to break up, and on one of the farthest, wildest lakes I ever visited. I calculated there could be no human being nearer than one hundred miles. I was pushing my canoe through the loose ice, one cold day, when just around a point that projected into the lake, I heard something walking through the ice. It made so much noise, and stepped so regularly, that I felt sure it must be a moose. I got my rifle ready, and held it cocked in one hand, while I pushed the canoe with the other. Slowly and carefully I rounded the point, when, what was my astonishment to see, not a moose, but a man, wading in the water—the ice water! He had nothing on his hands or feet, and his clothes were torn almost from his limbs. He was walking, gesticulating with his hands, and talking to himself. He seemed to be wasted to a skeleton. With great difficulty I got him into my canoe, when I landed and made up a fire, and got him some hot tea and food. He had a bone of some animal in his bosom, which he had gnawed almost to nothing. He was nearly frozen, and quieted down, and soon fell asleep. I nursed him like an infant. With great difficulty, and in a roundabout way, I found out the name of the town from which he came. Slowly and carefully I got him along, around falls, and over portages, keeping a resolute watch on him, lest he should escape from me in the forest. At length, after nearly a week's travel, I reached the village where I supposed he lived. I found the whole community under deep excitement, and more than a hundred men were scattered in the woods and on the mountains, seeking for my crazy companion, for they had learned that he had wandered into the woods. It had been agreed upon that if he was found, the bells should be immediately rung and guns fired; and as soon as I landed a shout was raised, his friends rushed to him; the bells broke out in loud notes, and guns were fired, and their reports echoed again and again in forest and on mountain, till every seeker knew that the lost one was found. How many times I had to tell the story over. I never saw people so crazy with joy; for the man was of the first and best families, and they hoped his insanity would be but temporary, as I afterwards learned it was. How they feasted me, and when I came away, loaded my canoe with provisions and clothing, and everything for my comfort. It was a time and place of wonderful joy. They seemed to forget everything else, and think only of the poor man whom I had brought back." The old hunter ceased, and said: "Don't this make you think of the fifteenth chapter of Luke, where the man who lost one sheep left all the rest and sought it, and brought it home rejoicing; and of the teaching of our Saviour, that there is joy in heaven over one repenting, returning sinner?" "Oh yes; I have often compared the two, and though I don't suppose they ring bells and fire guns in that world, yet I have

no doubt they have some way of making their joy known." *The joy occasioned by the lost sheep being found*.—I. A FACT ACKNOWLEDGED. 1. It reminds us of the sheep's relation to the Saviour. He has an interest in it. "My sheep." His, even before it was found. 2. It reminds us of the sheep's former state. "Lost." (1) As to God. He derived no service or honour from it. (2) As to its fellow-creatures. They derived no benefit from its prayers, example, exertions, influence. (3) As to itself. Destitute of all real peace, hope, joy. II. THE SATISFACTION HERE IMPLIED. This is the Saviour's own joy on the occasion. We see this implied, and necessarily implied; for how could He call upon others to rejoice with Him, unless He was rejoicing Himself? How could you, unless you were walking, invite others to walk with you? But this satisfaction of the shepherd is not left at an uncertainty. It is here expressly affirmed. 1. The sheep was not conscious of the shepherd's kindness. No. When he laid hold of it, it panted and trembled; and when he was laying it on his shoulder, it struggled, and endeavoured to free itself, and as he carried it off, it wondered what he was going to do with it. It is the same with us, when, to use the words of the apostle, we are "apprehended of Christ Jesus." 2. We may view this joy of the Saviour in contrast with the convert's own connections and friends. Some of these may be alarmed and distressed, and imagine the man is going into distraction, or into despair. They know nothing of "a wounded spirit;" they are ignorant of the methods of Divine grace—how God wounds in order to heal; how He humbles in order to exalt; how He impoverishes in order to enrich; how He empties in order to fill. Hence they often send for the physician when they ought to send for the divine. You remember, that when Christian left the city of destruction and was crossing the field, his neighbours and friends, supposing he was deranged or disordered, cried out, "Stop! return!" but he, putting his fingers in his ears, rushed forward, crying, "Life, Life! Eternal life!" 3. We may review this joy as the result of success. How delightful to the husbandman after months of ploughing and sowing, to go forth and "see, first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear": and then, to "reap with joy" and carry home his "sheaves with him"! How pleasing to the builder, after furnishing the materials, to see the edifice rising in lovely proportion, till the topstone thereof is brought forth, with shoutings of "Grace, grace, unto it." And, oh, what joy did the Saviour experience when "He ascended to His Father and our Father; to His God and our God"; after saying, "I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do." 4. Then this joy may be viewed as indicative of His benevolence. 5. This joy of His should be the penitent's encouragement. 6. If this joy be the sinner's hope, it should be the saint's example. He was infinitely more than example, but nothing less. And "he who says He abideth in him, ought himself, also, so to walk even as He walked." If you depend upon Him, you must resemble Him. III. THE DISPOSITION HERE ENJOINED. Not willing to enjoy the pleasure alone, He calls on others to share it. (*W. Jay.*) *Joy enhanced by partnership*.—Every man rejoices twice when he has a partner of his joy. A friend shares my sorrow, and makes it but a moiety; but he swells my joy, and makes it double. For so two channels divide the river, and lessen it into rivulets, and make it fordable, and apt to be drunk up by the first revels of the Syrian star; but two torches do not divide, but increase the flame. And though my tears are the sooner dried up when they run on my friend's cheeks in the furrows of compassion, yet, when my flame hath kindled his lamp, we unite the glories, and make them radiant, like the golden candlesticks that burn before the throne of God, because they shine by numbers, by light, and joy. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *A search that never fails*.—The Rev. J. R. Macduff, D.D., tells of a gallant vessel, manned with gallant hearts, which went forth amid the frowning icebergs of the northern seas to search for a band of missing explorers. They sailed thither, buoyed with the faint feeble hope that the objects of their search might still be found, battling bravely with eternal winter. They went after the lost until they found them; but, alas! they found them with the stiffened snow and ice as their winding-sheets. They brought not back the living, but only some sad mementoes and memorials of the dead. Not so is the journey, not so the pursuits of the great Shepherd of the sheep. Those whom He has marked for His own, He will, without fail, bring home. Not one can elude His pursuit nor evade His loving scrutiny. *The lost found*.—One week evening an old woman, very poor and very lame, heard the church bell ring for service. She had never been to church before, but took it into her head to go this once. The minister preached on the parable of the lost sheep, and his words conveyed real news, and joyful news too, to the old woman.

She sat drinking it in as a traveller drinks at a well in the desert, to save his very life. "What," said she to herself, "be I then a sinner? Yes, surely I be. What, be I then just like a lost sheep? Aye, for sure, I am just like that. And be there a Shepherd searching about for me? Will He find me? Be I worth His while? A Saviour for a poor thing like me! 'Tis wonderful loving." These were her self-communings as she hobbled back on her crutches to her dark cellar. A short time afterwards the clergyman received a message that the poor old woman was dying and earnestly desirous of seeing him. The moment he made his appearance she exclaimed: "That is the man who told me about the lost sheep. I want to know more about it." So he sat down, saying, "I will gladly tell you more about it. I will tell you also about the sheep that was found." "Yes," she exclaimed, "found! found! found!" She did not live long after this interview, and she passed away with the same words on her dying lips: "Found! found! found!"

Rescue of lost:—Some years ago Southwark was divided into districts by the visitors of the Auxiliary Bible Society. One district was found to contain such a depraved neighbourhood that it was spoken of as the "Forlorn Hope;" and for some time no individual would engage to visit it. At length three ladies, advanced in life, undertook the hopeless task. On entering one house of the vilest description, they found, in the first room into which they went, a young female, of pleasing appearance, mixing something in a cup, which she put into a closet when she saw them. They conversed with her, and asked if she would accept a Testament, which she gladly received. They found she was the daughter of a clergyman, but, vain of her personal attractions, she had been betrayed into that wretched course of life. She eagerly listened to all they said; and finding her anxious to leave the paths of wickedness, they procured her admission into an asylum, and the event proved that she was indeed desirous to return to the paths of virtue. The mixture in the cup when these ladies entered the house was poison. In a few short hours, in all human probability, she would have departed to everlasting misery. She afterwards filled a situation of comfort, and was enabled to look forward with hope to a blissful eternity. Joy shall be in heaven.—*On the joy which*

is in heaven at the repentance of a sinner:—I. HOW WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND THE JOY THAT IS IN HEAVEN AT THE REPENTANCE OF A SINNER. As it refers to God, it seems very inconsistent with the happiness and perfection of the Divine nature to suppose Him really capable of joy, any more than of grief, or any other passion. Because this would be to imagine some new accession to His pleasure and happiness, which being always infinite, can never have anything added to it. And, therefore, we are to understand this, as it relates to God, in the same manner as we do infinite other passages of Scripture, where human passions are ascribed to Him, to be spoken by way of condescension and after the language and manner of the sons of men; and to signify only thus much to us, that the conversion of a sinner is a thing highly pleasing and acceptable to God. As it refers to angels and other blessed spirits, I see no inconvenience why it may not be understood more strictly and literally; that they conceive a new joy at the news of a sinner's repentance, and find a fresh pleasure and delight springing up in their minds, whenever they hear the joyful tidings of a sinner rescued from the slavery of the devil and the danger of eternal damnation; of a new member added to the kingdom of God, that shall be a companion and a sharer with them in that blessedness which they enjoy. II. WHO ARE HERE MEANT BY THE JUST PERSONS THAT NEED NO REPENTANCE. Our Saviour plainly designs those who, being religiously educated, and brought up in the fear of God, had never broke out into any extravagant and vicious course of life, and so in some sense had no need of repentance, that is, of changing the whole course of their lives, as the prodigal son had. III. WITH WHAT REASON IT IS HERE SAID, THAT THERE IS "MORE JOY IN HEAVEN OVER ONE SINNER THAT REPENTETH, THAN OVER NINETY AND NINE JUST PERSONS WHO NEED NO REPENTANCE." 1. That the same thing, considered in several respects, may in some respects have the advantage of another thing, and for those reasons be preferred before it, and yet not have the advantage of it absolutely and in all respects. Moral comparisons are not to be exacted to a mathematical strictness and rigour. (1) The greater the difficulty of virtue is, so much the greater is the praise and commendation of it: and not only we ourselves take the more joy and comfort in it, but it is more admirable and delightful to others. Now, it cannot be denied to be much more difficult to break off a vicious habit, than to go on in a good way which we have been trained up in, and always accustomed to. (2) They who are reclaimed from a wicked course are often more thoroughly and zealously good

afterwards. Their remorse for sin quickens and spurs them on in the ways of virtue and goodness. 2. Our Saviour does not here compare repentance with absolute innocence and perfect righteousness, but with the imperfect obedience of good men, who are guilty of many sins and infirmities; but yet, upon account of the general course and tenor of their lives, are, by the mercy and favour of the gospel, esteemed just and righteous persons; and, for the merits and perfect obedience of Christ, so accepted by God. 3. This utterance of our Saviour is to be understood as spoken very much after the manner of men, and suitably to the nature of human passions, and the usual occasion of moving them. We are apt to be exceedingly affected with the obtaining of what we did not hope for, and much more with regaining of what we looked upon as lost and desperate. Concluding inferences: 1. The blessed spirits above have some knowledge of the affairs of men here below. 2. If God and the blessed spirits above rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, so should we too: and not fret and murmur as the Pharisees did. 3. The consideration of what hath been said should mightily inflame our zeal, and quicken our industry and diligence for the conversion of sinners. 4. What an argument and encouragement is here to repentance, even to the greatest of sinners. (*Archbishop Tillotson.*)

Angels' joy over penitence:—Why should these heavenly beings rise into such an excitement? What have they to do with our repentance down here? We look for an explanation. I. We must bear in mind the INTENSE SYMPATHY WHICH THESE ANGELS HAVE WITH JEHOVAH, WHO IS GOD OVER ALL. They unceasingly catch their inspiration and impulse from His face, before which they stand. If we were to draw a picture of that shining host, we might represent a throng which no man can number, with gaze all attracted one way towards the throne from which emanates the whole bliss and beauty of that heavenly estate. A gleam of gladness on the ineffable features is reproduced upon the countenances of all in that assemblage, and the quick response beams from every eye, trembles in every voice of eager utterance, and rings out joyously from every struck harp. Thus they serve Him day and night in His temple. Hence, the view which God Himself has of a repentant soul is immediately observed and transmitted. And what that view is, is easily found out (see John i. 18). II. But again: In order to appreciate the full meaning of a gladness so extraordinary as this in heaven, WE MUST REMEMBER THAT THESE ANGELS HAVE ALWAYS MANIFESTED AN ABSORBING INTEREST IN MEN AS THE CREATURES OF GOD. They know, better than we know ourselves, we shall have to admit, what we once were, and what we now are, and in the end what we may become by the manifold grace of God. 1. They saw our race at its beginning, before it was defiled by sin. They sang together at the creation (see Job xxxviii. 7). It is needful for us to struggle up to gain an adequate idea of what perfect holiness is; they know by intuition; and they saw man when the race was as holy as their own, and they have not forgotten it. 2. They know what we are now better than we know ourselves. We see as in enigma, darkly; they see in the sunshine of God's great love, out of which they know we have fallen. 3. They know what we can become better than we know ourselves. They understand the essential grandeur of grace as a process of renewal and restoration. To them a soul is priceless because it can hold a palm-branch, it can wear a crown, it can sing a song for the King. They measure the supreme height into which the redeemed are advanced when by penitence and faith they are lifted into love. III. Once more: In order to understand this great emotion of the angels, WE MUST RECOLLECT THAT THEY HAVE ALWAYS EXHIBITED AN EAGER INTEREST IN THE PURPOSE AND WORD OF CHRIST AS THE SON OF GOD. 1. This was a matter of great difficulty to them in the beginning. It is not revealed to us that there was any subject which ever attracted their attention more than this scheme of redemption by Jesus. That, we are told, "the angels desire to look into" (see 1 Peter i. 12). 2. The steps of the wonderful disclosure were all under their observation. They saw the Saviour pass by through their shining ranks out of heaven on His way to the world. They marked how He laid aside His glory, and took the form of a servant. But lest they should imagine they were to despise Him in His humiliation, there came then a sudden command through heaven: "Let all the angels of God worship Him!" Then He moved on. Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Capernaum, Calvary, and Bethany succeeded; at last they saw what it all meant. 3. The risk now must have been fully appreciated. Would this plan succeed? At first these angels seem to have indulged in one irrepressible acclamation of supreme delight; they sang "Glory to God in the highest," over Bethlehem plains. But then they settled back upon their "looking into" the rest. Peering over the battlements of

their celestial abode, they watched John the Baptist as he preached repentance; they saw how the whole success or failure turned upon that. Would anybody repent and come back to God's love in answer to the invitation? Must Jesus have died and pleaded in vain? 4. Now think of the announcement of a sinner returning unto purity. Imagine Simon Peter, or Nathanael, or Nicodemus, on bended knees before Christ, the sinner's Friend. Repentance had begun upon earth; the plan of redemption would answer! With what abashed joy these angels must have looked in each other's faces; and then in an instant of delighted wonderment they would seek the Divine Countenance in the throne. Now let our minds slowly receive two or three reflections: 1. See the value of the conversion of just one soul. "One sinner that repenteth." What is Zion's glory? Read Psalm lxxvii. 5, 6. 2. When angels are so excited, how strange seems our apathy! Just out of sight is a world all alive with enthusiasm and zeal. 3. Is it possible that angels care more for sinners' salvation than some of the sinners seem to care for themselves to be saved? (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *Joy in heaven*.—1. They rejoice because an heir of heaven has been led to claim his inheritance. Mark the words, "Joy in heaven." Heaven belongs to the penitent soul, and he belongs to heaven. For heaven is the dwelling-place of God and the home of His children. It is our home by a double title. Every member of the Church of Christ who is as the lost sheep, or as the lost piece of money, or as the younger son, is one lost out of the family of God, and when he returns, he is one restored to the place from which he was missing. 2. And the joy at his repentance finds its reason in the fact, that a man's repentance is the removal of that one obstacle which prevents his restoration to his place in the family of God. What is that obstacle? Do I need to name it? It is sin. 3. And thus we are led to notice another element in those causes from which the joy of the heavenly ones proceeds; it is the value of the soul which is thus emancipated by the mighty change which has passed upon it. "The redemption of the soul is precious." We are in danger of forgetting the intrinsic worth and dignity of the soul of man in consequence of the loss which it has sustained through the Fall and by sin. (*W. R. Clark, M.A.*) *Joy over penitents*.—I. WHO ARE THOSE THAT NEED NO REPENTANCE? There are two modes of solving this difficulty, so as perfectly to harmonize the doctrine of the text with the general system of Divine truth. In the first place, there are those who have repented, and are no longer denominated penitents. In the next place, there is no necessity for taking the words in their absolute sense. Our Lord frequently speaks in an hypothetical or supposititious manner. II. WHY IS THERE MORE JOY IN HEAVEN OVER ONE SINNER THAT REPENTETH THAN OVER NINETY-NINE JUST PERSONS THAT NEED NO REPENTANCE? Whether we can fully understand the causes of their joy is uncertain. There may be certain relations in which they exist that our more limited nature cannot comprehend, and which powerfully affect their minds with impressions of joy. We are a great deal more affected by recent than by remote causes. Now it is probable that all beings have a great similarity in this respect, and as repentance is a thing of recent occurrence, as it is the essential fact in the history of man's felicity, as it is the very gate to the celestial country, angels may feel a peculiar delight in an event so singular, and connected with infinite results. Then, again, it is probable that, like ourselves, angels are affected by contrast; and what contrast can be more striking than that exhibited by the impenitent and the penitent? Lastly, I would suggest a few hints which naturally arise out of the subject. In the first place, what an infinite value is stamped upon this transformation of the heart—repentance! The penitent becomes entitled to all the benefits which are comprehended in the enjoyment of the presence and blessing of God. Secondly, we see the importance of the gospel. This is the great instrument for producing repentance. Thirdly, it affords the most delightful encouragement to sinners to repent. (*R. Hall, M.A.*) *Celestial sympathy*.—I. IT IS POSSIBLE FOR US TO AUGMENT THE HAPPINESS OF HEAVEN. If you would this day repent and come to God, the news of your salvation would reach heaven, and then, hark to the shouts of the ransomed! Your little child went away from you into the good land. While she was here you brought her all kinds of beautiful presents. Sometimes you came home at nightfall with your pockets full of gifts for her, and no sooner did you put your night-key into the latch than she began at you, saying, "Father, what have you brought me?" She is now before the throne of God. Can you bring her a gift to-day? You may. Coming to Christ and repenting of sin, the tidings will go up to the throne of God, and your child will hear of it. Oh! what a gift for her soul to-day. She will skip with new gladness on the everlasting hills when she hears of

it. I was at Sharpsburg during the war, and one day I saw a sergeant dash past on a lathered horse, the blood dripping from the spurs. I said: "That sergeant must be going on a very important message—he must be carrying a very important dispatch, or he wouldn't ride like that." Here are two angels of God flitting through the house, flitting toward the throne on quick dispatch. What is the news? Carrying up the story of souls repentant and forgiven, carrying the news to the throne of God, carrying the news to your kindred who are for ever saved. Oh! "there is joy in heaven among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." And suppose this whole audience should turn to the Lord this morning? Heaven would be filled with doxologies. I was reading of a king who, after gaining a great victory, said to his army: "Now, no shouting; let everything be quiet, no shouting." But if this morning your soul should come to God, nothing could stop the shouting of the armies of God before the throne; for "there is joy in heaven among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." II. HEAVEN AND EARTH ARE IN CLOSE SYMPATHY. People talk of heaven as though it were a great way off. They say it is hundreds of thousands of miles before you reach the first star, and then you go hundreds of thousands of miles before you get to the second star, and then it is millions of miles before you reach heaven. They say heaven is the centre of the universe, and we are on the rim of the universe. That is not the idea of my text. I think the heart of heaven beats very close to our world. We measure distances by the time taken to traverse those distances. It used to be a long distance to San Francisco. Many weeks and months were passed before you could reach that city. Now it is seven days. It used to be six weeks before you could voyage from here to Liverpool. Now you can go that distance in eight or nine days. And so I measure the distance between earth and heaven, and I find it is only a flash. It is one instant here, and another instant there. It is very near to-day. Christ says in one place it is not twenty-four hours' distance, when He says to the penitent thief: "This day, this day, shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Oh! how near heaven is to earth! By oceanic cable you send a message. As it is expensive to send the message, you compress a great deal of meaning in a few words. Sometimes in two words you can put vast meaning. And it seems to me that the angels of God who carry news from earth to heaven need to take up this morning, in regard to your soul, only two words in order to kindle with gladness all the redeemed before the throne; only two words: "Father saved," "mother saved," "son saved," "daughter saved." And "there is joy in heaven among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." III. THE SALVATION OF THE SOUL IS OF VAST IMPORTANCE. When the French Government passed from Thiers to McMahon, I do not suppose it was reported in heaven. When, in the recent English elections, the contest was between Conservatives and Liberals, the result, I do not suppose, was reported in heaven. But there is one item that must go up—there is one thing that must be told. Let the flying hoofs of God's courier clash through the portals, and the news fly from gate to temple, and from temple to mansion, and from mansion to throne, that one soul has been converted. Last summer, among the White Mountains, a stage driver was very reckless. He had a large company of passengers and drove six horses. Coming along a dangerous place, the leaders shied off, and the stage was thrown over the rocks. A few men leaped out and were saved, others went down and were bruised, and some were slain. When those who were saved got home, how their friends must have congratulated them that they got off from all that peril! Well! the angels of God look down, and see men driving along the edge of eternal disasters, drawn by leaping, foaming, uncontrollable perils: and when a man, just before he comes to the fatal capsize, leaps off and comes away in safety, do you wonder that the angels of God clap their hands and cry: "Good! Good! saved from hell! Saved for heaven! Saved for ever!" The redemption of a soul must be a very wonderful thing, or heaven would not make such a jubilation about it. It must be a great thing, or there would not be so much excitement in that land where coronations are every-day occurrences, and the stones of the field are amethysts and chrysoprases. (*De Witt Talmage, D.D.*) *Joy over the saved*:—We may illustrate this text by an incident which occurred in connection with the wreck of the ill-fated steamer, *Central America*. A few days after that startling event, which sent hundreds to a watery grave, and plunged the nation in grief, a pilot boat was seen, on a fair breezy morning, standing up the bay of New York. The very appearance of the vessel gave token that she was freighted with tidings of no common interest. With every sail set, and streamers flying, she leaped along the waters as if buoyant with some great joy; while the glad winds

that swelled her canvas, and the sparkling waves that kissed her sides and urged her on her way, seemed to laugh with conscious delight. As she drew nearer, an unusual excitement was visible on her deck; and her captain, running out to the extreme point of the bowsprit and swinging his cap, appeared to be shouting something with intense earnestness and animation. At first the distance prevented his being distinctly understood. But soon, as the vessel came farther into the harbour, the words, "Three more saved! Three more saved!" reached the nearest listeners. They were caught up by the crews of the multitudinous ships that lay anchored around, and sailors sprang wildly into the rigging and shouted, "Three more saved!" They were heard on the wharves; and the porter threw down his load, and the drayman stopped his noisy cart, and shouted, "Three more saved." The tidings ran along the streets; and the news-boys left off crying the last murder, and shouted, "Three more saved." Busy salesmen dropped their goods, book-keepers their pens, bankers their discounts, tellers their gold, and merchants, hurrying on the stroke of the last hour of grace to pay their notes, paused in their headlong haste, and shouted, "Three more saved!" Louder and louder grew the cry—fast and faster it spread—along the crowded piers of the Hudson and East River—up by the graves of Trinity, the Hotels of Broadway, the marble palaces of the Fifth Avenue—over the heights of Brooklyn—across to Hoboken and Jersey City—away, away, beyond tower and pinnacle, beyond mansion and temple, beyond suburb and hamlet—till a million hearts pulsated with its thrill, and above all the sounds of the vast metropolis, mightier than all, hushing all, rose the great exultant shout, "Three more saved! Three more saved!" If cold and selfish men will thus stop short in the eager quest of gain or of pleasure, to let the voice of humanity speak out, and to express their joy that three fellow-beings have been rescued from the ocean depths, shall we deem it an incredible thing that the holy and loving denizens of heaven should rejoice when a sinner repents, and is delivered from the abyss of hell? (*Dr. Ide.*) *Repentance not better than obedience.*—And in truth we may learn, from the working of human affection, that the rejoicing more of the lost sheep than of the ninety and nine, proves not that the one is more beloved than the rest. If one member of his family be in sickness or danger, does not that one seem almost to engross the heart of the parent? Are not the other members comparatively forgotten, so completely, for a while, are the thoughts absorbed in the suffering individual? It is not—and the fathers and mothers amongst you know that it is not—that the sick child is better loved than those which are in health. It is not that your affections are more centred on the son who is far away amid the perils of the deep than on those who are sitting safely at your fireside. It is only that danger causes you to feel a special interest for the time in some one of your offspring—an interest which for the most part ceases with the occasion, and which would be immediately transferred to another of the family, if that other were the subject of the peril. Oh, we quite believe that the mother, gazing on the child who seems about to be taken from her by death, is conscious of a feeling of passionate attachment which does not throb within her as she looks on her other little ones sleeping in their unbroken healthfulness. And if disease be suddenly arrested, and the child over whom she had wept in her agony smile on her again, and again charm her with its prattle, why we are persuaded that she will rejoice more of that child than of its brothers and its sisters, over whose beds she has never hung in anguish. Yet it is not that the one is dearer to her than the others. The probability of losing the one, whilst the others were safe, has caused a concentration of her solitudes and anxieties. But her heart is all the while as thoroughly devoted to those who need not the same intenseness of her maternal care; and you have only to suppose the sickness from which one child has recovered seizing on another, and presently you will see her centring on this other the same eager watchfulness; and for a time will there be again the same apparent absorption of the affections: and if again there be restoration to health, oh, again there will be the manifestations of an exuberant gladness, and the mother will rejoice more of the boy or the girl who has been snatched back from the grave than of those members of her household who have not approached its confines. But not, we again say, because she loves one child better than the rest—not because the healthful must become the sick in order to their being cherished and prized. Whatever her rapture on being told "thy son liveth," the mother would far prefer the deep and unruffled tranquillity of a household not visited by danger and disease. And thus also with regard to moral peril, which brings the case nearer to that of the parable under review. If one member of a family grow up vicious and dissolute, whilst the

others pursue stedfastly a course of obedience and virtue, it is not to be disputed that the thoughts of the parents will almost be engrossed by their profligate child, and that the workings of anxious affection will be more evident in regard of this prodigal than of the sons and the daughters who have given them no cause for uneasiness. Is it that they love the reckless better than the obedient? is it that they would love the obedient better if they were turned into the reckless? You know that this is no true account of the matter. You know that the seeing what we love in danger excites that interest on its behalf which we are scarcely conscious of whilst we see it in security. The danger serves to bring out the affection, and to show us its depth; but it rather affords occasion of manifestation than increases the amount. And, beyond question, if the child whose perverseness and profligacy have disquieted the father and the mother, causing them anxious days and sleepless nights, turn from the error of his ways, and seek their forgiveness and blessing ere they die, there will be excited such emotions in their hearts as have never been stirred by the rectitude and obedience of the rest of their offspring. And, in like manner, so far as we may carry up the illustration from the earthly to the heavenly, we deny that, in representing God as rejoicing more over the recovered tribe than over those which never fell, we represent Him as better pleased with repentance than with uniform obedience. We do but ascribe to Him human emotions, just in order to show that there is a tenderness in Deity which makes Him solicitous, if the word be allowable, for those who have brought themselves into danger and difficulty, and which renders their deliverance an object of such mighty importance that, when achieved, it may be said to minister more to His happiness than the homage of the myriads who never moved His displeasure. And when, through the energies of redemption, the human race was reinstated in the place whence it fell, it was not that God prefers the penitent to those who never swerved from allegiance, and has greater delight in men who have sinned than in angels who have always obeyed; it was not on these accounts that He was more gladdened, as we suppose Him, by the recovery of what had wandered than by the steadfastness of what remained. It was only because, where there has been ground of anxiety, and a beloved object has been in peril, his restoration and safety open channels into which, for a while, the sympathies of the heart seem to pour all their fulness—it was only on this account that, Divine things being illustrated by human, our Creator might be likened to a man who, having found on the mountains the one sheep he had lost, “rejoiceth more of that sheep than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.” We judge from its context, as given by St. Matthew, that Christ designed to indicate the carefulness of God in reference to the erring members of the Church, which is specially His flock. He is there speaking of the little ones, who are His disciples and followers; and the truth which He declares illustrated by the parable is, that it is not the will of the Father that “one of these little ones should perish.” (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Vers. 8-10. *Either what woman having ten pieces of silver.—Man resembled to silver coin:—*1. And that in regard of matter. No metal except gold (which indeed is most solid and perfectly concocted with sufficient heat, so that it never corrupteth by rust) is to be compared with it. So man is the excellentest of all God's creatures except angels, and but a little inferior unto them (*Psa. viii. 5*). 2. In regard of lustre. For albeit silver in the ore be base and unsightly to look on, yet coming out of the mint purified and fined, it is beautiful. Thus, though man, while he was in the lump of clay, was without beauty; yet being formed, God put upon him great glory and majesty (*Psa. viii.*), so that in beauty and fairness he excelled all other visible creatures, as by those relics yet remaining, and to be found in sinful men, we may gather. As the complexion of David (*1 Sam. xvi. 12*). The beauty of Absalom, in whom there was not a blemish from top to toe (*2 Sam. xiv.*). The stature of Saul (*1 Sam. x.*) 3. In regard of stamp. Money hath some impress and image on it, as the Jewish shekel, which on the one side had Aaron's rod, and on the other side the pot of manna. So the Romans had Cæsar's image upon their coin, whereby they acknowledged subjection; and the coin which Jacob paid unto the Shechemites was stamped with a lamb (*Gen. xxxiii. 19*). Thus had man the image of his Maker, which God stamped on him as a mark of his possession. 4. Money hath its stamp and form from regal authority; it must be refined and made (for it makes not itself) by the prince's royalty. Thus man was the work of God's hands (*Psa. c.*), and His alone (*Job x. 8*). 5. Silver hath a good sound above other metals. And hence it was that trumpets of silver were

commanded by the Lord to be made (Numb. x. 1, 2) for shrillness and clearness. Thus man above other creatures had a tongue given him to praise his Maker with, which is therefore called the glory of man (Gen. xlix. 6; Psa. xvi. 9). 6. Silver commands all things, and answers all things, as speaketh Solomon (Eccles. x. 19). There is nothing (whether holy or profane) but are at the beck and command of it. Such a commanding power had man by his creation over all creatures (Psa. viii. 6). "Thou hast made him to have dominion in the works of Thy hands"; such authority God gave him (Gen. i. 28), willing him to "rule over the fishes of the sea, over the fowls of heaven, and over every beast that moveth upon the earth." Silver is not all of a like worth; there are different pieces and of different value. The Jews had their gerah, and half shekel, and shekel (Exod. xxx. 13), with divers other coins of silver. So all were not of a like degree in the creation, though all excellent and good; for God observed order from the beginning. Amongst the angels some are superior, and some inferior; there are degrees amongst them (Coloss. i. 16). (*N. Rogers.*) *The lost coin*:—I. LOOK AT THE THING LOST, AND YOU WILL FIND SEVERAL POINTS OF IMPORTANCE THEREBY SUGGESTED. 1. It was a coin. That is to say, it was not simply a piece of a precious metal, but that metal moulded and minted into money, bearing on it the king's image and superscription, and witnessing to his authority wherever it circulated. 2. But the coin was lost, and this suggests that in sinful man the image of his Maker has gone out of sight, and the great purpose of his being has been frustrated. His intellect does not like to retain God in its knowledge; his heart has estranged its love from God; and his life is devoted to another lord than his Creator. He is lost. 3. Yet he is not absolutely worthless. The coin, though lost, has still a value. If it can be recovered, it will be worth as much as ever. 4. But yet, again, this coin was lost in the house. The woman did not let it fall as she was crossing the wild and trackless moor, neither did she drop it into the unfathomed depths of ocean. Had she done so, she would never have thought of seeking for it; she would have given it up as irrecoverable. Now, this points to the fact that the soul of the sinner is recoverable. It is capable of being restored to its original dignity and honour. It has in it still potentialities as great and glorious as those which ever belonged to it. II. This brings me to the consideration of THE SEARCH, WHEREIN WE HAVE ALSO SOME THINGS SUGGESTED WHICH ARE PECULIAR TO THIS PARABLE. Eastern houses, unlike our own, are constructed in such a way as to keep out the light and heat of the sun as much as possible. They have few windows, and even the few which they have are shaded with such lattice-work as tends to exclude rather than admit the sunbeam. Hence the rooms are generally dark; and so, even if the coin were lost at noonday, the light of a candle would be required to seek for it. Nor was there, in Eastern dwellings, the same scrupulous cleanliness that we love to see in so many homes around us. The floors were often covered with rushes, which, being changed only at rare intervals, collected a vast amount of dust and filth, among which a piece of money might be most readily lost. Hence the lighting of a candle and the sweeping of the house were the most natural things to be done in such a case. But whom does this woman represent? and what, spiritually, are we to understand by the lighting of a candle and the sweeping of the house? The woman, in my judgment, symbolizes the Holy Spirit, and I look upon the means which she employed in her search for the lost coin as denoting the efforts made by the Holy Spirit for the recovery of a lost soul. Now let us see what these were. She lighted a candle, and swept the house, and searched diligently. The light most evidently represents the truth; but what are we to make of the sweeping? Some would take it to illustrate the purifying work of the Holy Ghost in the heart. But that view cannot be maintained, since the purifying of the soul is not a work in order to, but rather subsequent upon, its recovery. I take it rather, therefore, to represent that disturbance of settled opinions and practices—that turning of the soul, as it were, upside down—which is frequently seen as a forerunner of conversion; that confusion and disorder occasioned by some providential dealing with the man, such as personal illness, or business difficulties, or family bereavement, or the like, and which frequently issues in the coming of the soul to God; for here also chaos often precedes the new creation. Truth introduced into the heart, and providential disturbances and unsettlements in order to its introduction—these are the things symbolized by the lighting of the candle and the sweeping of the house. The truth which the Holy Spirit employs for the purpose of conversion is the Word of God, all of which has been given to men by His own inspiration; and the especial portion of that Word which He uses for His saving work is the wondrous

story of the Cross. III. We come now, in the third place, to look at THE JOY OVER THE RECOVERED COIN; and here, as before, we shall restrict ourselves to that which is peculiar to this parable. In the story of the lost sheep, while the social character of the joy is certainly referred to, the speciality in the gladness of the shepherd over its finding lay in the fact, to which prominence is given in the appended note of interpretation, that it was greater than over the ninety and nine which had never strayed. Here, however, the peculiarity is in the sociality of the joy. God's joy, if I may dare to use the words, needs society to make it complete; and the fact that there are those beside Him to whom He can make known the story of each recovered soul, redoubles His own gladness, and diffuses among them His own Divine delight. Nor let it be supposed that this is a mere fanciful idea, for which there is no foundation in Scripture apart from the teaching of this parable. What says Paul? "God hath created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. iii. 10). Now, these words mean, if they mean anything at all, that through means of the Church, God designed to show to principalities and powers in heavenly places His manifold wisdom. In the manifestation of this wisdom God has His highest work, and, in its appreciation by spiritual intelligences, through the Church of Christ, He has His greatest joy. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*)

The search of love:—Type of a soul ignorant of its death, utterly unconcerned with the thought of sin. Yet a coin, having image and superscription. It may be covered with dust, it may be half defaced or hidden under heaps of rubbish; but it has not returned, and cannot return, into the uncoined state. Meet emblem of man's soul in its lowest estate. "I am God's coin," said one of old; "from His treasure-house I have wandered." And it is because we are God's, that He seeks. I. GOD'S LOVE LIGHTS A LAMP OF REVELATION IN THE WORLD. Though you may care little about your lost soul, God cares for it much. He has lit His candle—the candle of Divine revelation, and He is throwing its illumination upon you. Hinder not, thwart not, His search for your soul. Love herself might light the candle, and yet the lost coin not be found under the long accumulation of dirt—of easily-besetting sins and long-indulged habits. So the parable goes on to speak of a sweeping. II. THE LOVE OF GOD SWEEPS THE HOUSE, WHICH IS THE MAN. Is not this the real meaning of that sickness, that bereavement, that disappointment which seemed to you so casual, or so wanton, or so cruel? It was the love of God still. III. THE SEEKING IS UNTO FINDING. Love will not stay till she finds. Help her. Kick not against the goad. IV. TREAT THE TEXT AS A PRECEPT. Light a candle, sweep the house, and seek diligently till you find. (*Dean Vaughan.*)

The lost groat:—I. THE LOST GROAT. 1. It is a symbol of the human soul. (1) The soul seems to be of little value, if considered in its imperfections, in its inability to perform supernatural acts, and even more so, if compared to the holy angels, who are purer than gold, brighter than diamonds. (2) Nevertheless, the groat, as a coin, has its value. So is the human soul of great value, because it is created according to the image and likeness of God, redeemed by His precious blood, sealed by the Holy Spirit. Thus it is raised to a supernatural state, and enabled to merit the glory and bliss of heaven. 2. How the groat, the human soul, is lost. (1) By the deceitfulness of the devil, who, driven by envy and hatred, endeavours to deprive the Divine Master of His coin, the coin of its splendour. He buries the soul in the mire of sin. (2) Through the fault of man. Whilst he is unmindful of being God's own property, undervalues the worth of his soul, keeps company with thieves, his soul is lost. 3. The consequences are most deplorable. (1) The lost soul is covered with the filth of sin, from which it can never cleanse itself by its own power. (2) The value of the soul diminishes. The merits of the past are lost, the power of ignorance and concupiscence increases. (3) The coinage disappears. Sin deforms the Divine image and likeness; at its entrance grace leaves the soul; and man falls under the curse and displeasure of God. II. THE SEEKING WOMAN. 1. This "woman" is the Church. 2. The "candle" is Christ, the light of the world. 3. The "friends and neighbours" are the angels and saints. (*W. Reischl.*)

The parable of the lost silver:—I. AS THE SILVER WAS PRECIOUS TO THE WOMAN, SO ARE OUR SOULS IN THE SIGHT OF GOD OUR SAVIOUR. We estimate a person's value for a thing by the price he gives, the sacrifice he makes, to obtain or recover it. How dear, then, was man to God, who loved him when fallen; yea, who so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have eternal life. II. AS THE PIECE OF

MONEY WAS LOST TO THE WOMAN, SO IS EVERY ONE WHO CONTINUES IN SIN LOST TO GOD. He is alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him. III. AS THE WOMAN SEARCHED FOR HER LOST TREASURE, AND SPARED NO PAINS TO RECOVER IT; SO DOES JESUS CHRIST SEEK THE SOUL THAT IS LOST BY SIN. IV. AS THE WOMAN CALLS HER FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS TO REJOICE WITH HER, FOR THE LOST PIECE FOUND; SO IS THERE JOY IN HEAVEN, IN THE PRESENCE OF THE ANGELS OF GOD, OVER ONE REPENTING SINNER. For this joy, Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame. Thus He sees of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied. And His joy is shared by the angels that surround His throne. 1. Let this parable, then, rebuke self-righteousness; let it teach humility. 2. Again—let this parable suggest the most powerful motive to instant repentance. For what motive is there, like Christ's enduring and seeking love? (*E. Blencowe, M.A.*) *Man's fall God's loss*:—This parable pictures God as the Redeemer of man in three different modes or attitudes—shall I say of feeling? I. The first division of the picture represents GOD AS CONTEMPLATING AS A LOSS TO HIMSELF THE STATE OF SIN INTO WHICH MAN HAS FALLEN. No one but God could have ventured thus to represent God. God mourns the fall of man as a lost treasure, as something in which He delighted, and of which sin has robbed Him. God has a property of the heart in man's welfare. II. In the second part of the picture, GOD IS REPRESENTED AS MAKING AN EFFORT FOR THE RECOVERY OF MAN FROM THE SIN AND MISERY INTO WHICH HE HAS FALLEN. The fact of atonement is here; the quickening work of the Holy Ghost is here, and the manifold ministry to man is here; by all which God is seeking to bring men to Himself and save them from sin; and the more one seeks to look at this, the more one feels how true it is that the inflexible righteousness of God, that the infinite love of God, is full of a determination not to let His human treasure go without an effort to recover it. III. The third point is that GOD AND THE GOOD ANGELS REJOICE IN HEAVEN OVER THE RECOVERY OF MEN. (*A. Hannay.*) *A priceless gem*:—I. THE HOMELY STORY. 1. It may seem like a little thing to you—this sixpence; but what is great to a child is not small to the father; and that is not little to God that is great to any man. He who knows all about the homes, and the hearts that beat in London in such homes, knows that sometimes the difference between sixpence and no sixpence may mean all the difference between food and no food, shelter and no shelter for the night, ease from pain, or no ease from pain. Oh, what magic that prosaic thing, the piece of silver, can work! Look at our Nonconformist father, Lawrence. See him seated under a hedgerow on the morning of the great Puritan exodus in 1662; see him looking as if fit to die, for he thinks about his hungry and homeless little ones. What is it that suddenly makes the eye flash, and the face quiver, and the foot spring? Only the sight of a lost piece of silver. He had just found a sixpence in the ditch before him, and it fairly seemed to him as if it had come down into that ditch from the very Throne of thrones that very moment. 2. The central person in this story is a woman—not some stately Cleopatra, not some gay Herodias, not some grand lady with face beautiful as a dream, and step graceful as a wave, who, having possessed ten gems of rarest water, or ten pearls of great price, has lost one of them; but only a poor village woman, who, having saved up for the rent, or a rainy day, ten pieces of silver, has lost one. She searches; finds; calls her neighbours together to rejoice with her. The event was not enough to electrify a cabinet but it was enough to lighten her heart, and to send a sensation all through her little world. II. THE DIVINE MEANING. 1. Look at the coin, and then think of the value of the soul. Souls look through those waiting, gazing eyes around me, souls look out from those listening ears, souls thrill along those nerves. Souls! Why will ye cleave to the dust? Awake, know yourselves, and try to think about your own unimaginable value. 2. Look at the coin lost, and think of the soul lost in the house of this world. Some years ago the men working on the Thames Embankment—laying its foundations—found a lost piece of silver, stamped with the image of a Roman Emperor. Perhaps that piece of silver had been lost 1,800 years. My spirit flashes back to that spot, and to that moment, and I see the scene just how it all happened. I see a man coming down from the green solitudes of Camberwell, where the Roman station is, coming down to the edge of the river. I see him cross from what we now call the Surrey side, to what we now call the city side. I see him, as he steps out of the boat, take his purse out to pay the ferryman, and I see the piece of silver slip from his fingers through the water, and there it stuck in the black slime of the river. It was for ages lost to the purpose for which it was made. It might as well not have been silver. Now I say there are souls lost like that coin. 3. I look at the coin lost, but not knowing that it is lost, and think of the soul lost in this house

and not knowing that it is lost. The frivolist. The sensualist. The formalist. These no more know they are lost than does the coin when it has rippled along the floor and slipped into a chink in the darkness! But it is a fact all the same. Once, certain explorers on an Arctic expedition were working their way through the still, gray air in the eternal silence, when they suddenly came upon an antique, spectral-looking ship locked in blocks of ice. They boarded it, and one man took his lantern and ran down the companion-ladder into the state-cabin. He held it up. He found all the ship's company there. There sat the captain, with his hand upon the log-book; and there sat the mate, and there sat the doctor, and there sat the others. "Captain!" There was no stir. He cried again, "Captain!" But there was only the silence that creeps and shudders. "Captain!" He held his light up again and flashed it around—and what did that light reveal? Dead hands! dead lips! dead eyes!—dead men! The cold that had been strong enough to steel them through, and to freeze the life of their blood, had been strong enough to arrest the touch of Decay's hastening fingers, and to keep fixed in the form and attitude of life Death itself, and to keep it thus—so it was said—for nearly half a century. Oh! man do but think of what it is of which I am speaking. Dead souls! Lost souls! 4. Look at the search which this woman is making in the house, and think of the Holy Spirit's part in searching for the lost soul. There was once heard in the Isle of Wight a little girl say to her mother, when sweeping the cottage floor, "Mother, mother, pull the blind down, the sunshine makes the room so dusty." And so it is that the light in the house of the Interpreter may seem to make the room dusty, but it seems to create what it only reveals: it makes us think that we are worse than we are when we are only wiser than we were; it make us see ourselves, see our Saviour, and then, "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God." (C. Stanford, D.D.)

The lost silver piece :—1. First, the parable treats of man, the object of Divine mercy, as **LOST**. 1. Notice, first, the treasure was lost in the dust. The woman had lost her piece of silver, and in order to find it she had to sweep for it, which proves that it had fallen into a dusty place, fallen to the earth, where it might be hidden and concealed amid rubbish and dirt. Every man of Adam born is as a piece of silver lost, fallen, dishonoured, and some are buried amid foulness and dust. Thou art lost by nature, and thou must be found by grace, whoever thou mayst be. 2. In this parable that which was lost was altogether ignorant of its being lost. The silver coin was not a living thing, and therefore had no consciousness of its being lost or sought after. The piece of money lost was quite as content to be on the floor or in the dust, as it was to be in the purse of its owner amongst its like. It knew nothing about its being lost, and could not know. And it is just so with the sinner who is spiritually dead in sin, he is unconscious of his state, nor can we make him understand the danger and terror of his condition. The insensibility of the piece of money fairly pictures the utter indifference of souls unquicken by Divine grace. 3. The silver piece was lost but not forgotten. The woman knew that she had ten pieces of silver originally; she counted them over carefully, for they were all her little store, and she found only nine, but she well remembered that one more was hers and ought to be in her hand. This is our hope for the Lord's lost ones, they are lost but not forgotten, the heart of the Saviour remembers them, and prays for them. 4. Next, the piece of silver was lost but still claimed. Observe that the woman called the money, "my piece which was lost." When she lost its possession she did not lose her right to it; it did not become somebody else's when it slipped out of her hand and fell upon the floor. Those for whom Christ hath died, whom He hath peculiarly redeemed, are not Satan's even when they are dead in sin. They may come under the devil's usurped dominion, but the monster shall be chased from his throne. 5. Further, observe that the lost piece of money was not only remembered and claimed, but it was also valued. In these three parables the value of the lost article steadily rises. This is not very clear at first sight, because it may be said that a sheep is of more value than a piece of money; but notice that the shepherd only lost one sheep out of a hundred, but the woman lost one piece out of ten, and the father one son out of two. To the Lord of love a lost soul is very precious: it is not because of its intrinsic value, but it has a relative value which God sets at a high rate. 6. The piece of money was lost, but it was not lost hopelessly. The woman had hopes of recovering it, and therefore she did not despair, but set to work at once. I congratulate the Christian Church too, that her piece of money has not fallen where she cannot find it. I rejoice that the fallen around us are not past hope; yea, though they dwell in the worst dens of London, though they be thieves and harlots,

they are not beyond the reach of mercy. Up, O Church of God, while possibilities of mercy remain! 7. One other point is worthy of notice. The piece of silver was lost, but it was lost in the house, and the woman knew it to be so. What thankfulness there ought to be in your minds that you are not lost as heathens, nor lost amid Romish or Mohammedan superstition, but lost where the gospel is faithfully and plainly preached to you; where you are lovingly told, that whosoever believeth in Christ Jesus is not condemned. Lost, but lost where the Church's business is to look after you, where it is the Spirit's work to seek and to find you. This is the condition of the lost soul, depicted as a lost piece of silver. II. Secondly, we shall notice the soul under another condition, we shall view it as sovereign. By whom was the piece of silver sought? 1. It was sought by its owner personally. 2. This seeking became a matter of chief concern with the woman. 3. Now note, that the woman having thus set her heart to find her money, she used the most fit and proper means to accomplish her end. First, she lit a candle. So doth the Holy Spirit in the Church. But she was not content with her candle, she fetched her broom, she swept the house. If she could not find the silver as things were in the house, she brought the broom to bear upon the accumulated dust. Oh, how a Christian Church, when it is moved by the Holy Spirit, cleanses herself and purges all her work! 4. Carefully note that this seeking after the lost piece of silver with fitting instruments, the broom and the candle, was attended with no small stir. She swept the house—there was dust for her eyes; if any neighbours were in the house there was dust for them. You cannot sweep a house without causing some confusion and temporary discomfort. It is to be remarked, also, that in the seeking of this piece of silver the coin was sought in a most engrossing manner. 5. This woman sought continuously—"till she found it." III. The piece of silver found. Found! 1. In the first place, this was the woman's ultimatum, and nothing short of it. She never stopped until the coin was found. So it is the Holy Spirit's design, not that the sinner should be brought into a hopeful state, but that he should be actually saved: and this is the Church's great concern, not that people be made hearers, not that they be made orthodox professors, but that they be really changed and renewed, regenerated and born again. 2. The woman herself found the piece of money. It did not turn up by accident, nor did some neighbour step in and find it. The Spirit of God himself finds sinners, and the Church of God herself, as a rule, is the instrument of their recovery. 3. Now notice when she had found it what she did—she rejoiced. The greater her trouble in searching, the higher her joy in finding. What joy there is in the Church of God when sinners are converted! 4. Next, she calls her friends and neighbours to share her joy. I am afraid we do not treat our friends and neighbours with quite enough respect, or remember to invite them to our joys. Who are they? I think the angels are here meant; not only the angels in heaven, but those who are watching here below. The angels are wherever the saints are, beholding our orders and rejoicing in our joy. The joy is a present joy; it is a joy in the house, in the Church in her own sphere; it is the joy of her neighbours who are round about her here below. All other joy seems swallowed up in this: as every other occupation was suspended to find the lost silver, so every other joy is hushed when the precious thing is found. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The lost piece of money.*—I. WHAT BEFELL THIS WOMAN. She had ten pieces of silver, and of these she lost one—only one. That lost piece is man's soul. We were not always, not once, not at first, what we are now. II. WHAT THIS WOMAN DID TO FIND THE MONEY. She did everything proper in the circumstances. She could not have done more. Assuming that the woman symbolizes the Spirit of God, the candle shining in her hand is the Bible, God's revealed Word, which He takes and carries into the recesses of the sinner's soul, revealing its foulness and danger and misery, and making him feel his need of a Saviour. As to the sweeping, which disturbs the house and reveals a foulness that, so long as it lay unstirred, was perhaps never suspected: that may indicate the convictions, the alarms, the dread discoveries, the searchings and agitations of heart, which not unfrequently accompany conversion. It is not till the glassy pool is stirred that the mud at the bottom rises to light; it is when storms sweep the sea that what it hides in its depths is thrown up on the shore; it is when brooms sweep walls and floor that the sunbeams, struggling through a cloud of dust, reveal the foulness of the house; and it is agitations and perturbations of the heart which reveal its corruption, and are preludes to the purity and peace that sooner or later follow on conversion. III. THE WOMAN'S JOY AT FINDING THE PIECE OF SILVER. There is a peculiar pleasure felt in recovering what we have lost; or in having anything placed beyond

the reach of danger which we are afraid of losing. No boat making the harbour over a glassy sea, its snowy canvas filled by the gentle breeze, and shining on the blue waters like a sea bird's wing, is watched with such interest, or, as with sail flapping on the mast, it grates on the shingle, is welcomed with such joy, as one which, leaving the wreck on the thundering reef, comes through the roaring tempest, boldly breasts the billows, and bringing off the half-drowned, half-dead survivors, shoots within the harbour amid flowing tears and cheers that, bursting from the happy crowd, rise above the rage and din of elements. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*)

The Bible a moveable light:—The candle is a moveable light, carried by the woman from place to place. Wherever a lost piece of money is to be sought, there the candle must be carried that the searching may be thorough. This carrying of the candle, first into one place and then into another, is the Church's part in seeking for lost souls. While the whole truth for man's salvation is presented in Holy Scripture, and any man who would inquire as to the way of life may there find the light he needs to guide him aright, men do not readily search the Scriptures for themselves, that their own souls may be saved. In recognition of this neglect, illustrated in one way under the image of the wandering sheep, in another under the image of the lost piece of money, the necessity for the active work of seeking is acknowledged by the Church, as it is here taught by the Saviour. (*Calderswood.*)

A woman's loss:—You will have noticed that whereas in the other two parables of "the sheep," and "the prodigal," it is "a man" who is represented as rejoicing over the returning one—here it is "a woman." This may, indeed, be only to show that every kind of affection combines in the joy over the penitent—the man's strength and the woman's tenderness. But there may be more. At least, almost all the ancient divines have seen another sense in it. They consider that under the female appellation is meant here, as in many other places, the Church; and that the thought intended to be conveyed is of the Church having sustained the loss, and the Church, as a Church, seeking diligently for the lost one. And yet not altogether the Church, as something distinct and independent in itself—but the Church as that in which the Holy Ghost dwells—the Holy Ghost acting through the means of grace which constitute a Church. So, in the three parables, they would see the Trinity all combined in the same feeling of love and happiness—the Son, designated by the Shepherd; the Holy Spirit in the Church, by the woman; and the Father, by the parent of the prodigal. A great thought and a true one, even though the steps by which we here arrive at it may appear to some fanciful. Certain it is, that every soul which is in a condition to perish, is lost, not only to God, but to the Church. And well were it if the Church always so regarded it. And well if every member of the Church so felt it a personal loss to himself that any one single soul should die, that he could not help but stir up himself, and stir up others, to seek that soul till it was found. Would that the Holy Ghost were going forth in the one great Catholic Church, uniting in this feeling and in this resolve—that she would give herself no rest so long as there was one precious soul committed to her care which was lying undiscovered and unredeemed. For mark, brethren, the woman—different in this from the shepherd and the prodigal's father—seeks a thing which her own folly and her own carelessness had lost. First, she "lights a candle"—the well-known emblem in the Bible of three things—first, the Spirit of God in a man's soul; secondly, the Word of God; thirdly, the consistent lives of ministers and other servants of God. And these three together make the great detective force, and so ultimately the great restorative power which God uses in this world. O that every Church had lighted their candle! O that our candles were burning better! O that the Holy Ghost—prayed for and honoured, cherished and magnified in His own office—were here to be a great Illuminator in the midst of us! O that every baptized person were shining as he ought to be, in his daily walk, in good works, and kind acts, and witnesses of God's truth in this world! O think you, brethren, how then would the dark places of our land begin to grow bright again! How would the whole house shine! How would the poor lost ones be found! So, with the lighted candle, the woman went to "sweep the house." It is a great commotion and disturbance to "sweep"; but then it leads to cleanliness and order. So God's sweepings are severe things! But then it is only to brush away what had no right to be there. It is only to disclose precious things out of the rubbish. And there are precious things in our souls so covered with dust that they need sweeping. Afflictions will come, and scatter to the winds the incrustated sediment that has been so long thickening upon a man's mind. And for the time, while the sweeping is going on, the confusion and the

obscurity will seem only the greater. But you will not presently complain—you will not regret the turmoil—when the costly thing, that was almost hidden, sparkles again in the hand of its great Proprietor. Sweep our house, Lord, for we need it—not with the besom of destruction, though we deserve it—but sweep away, Lord, as thou knowest best, every “refuge of lies” where our soul lies buried! All the parables agree in the one, blessed, crowning thought—“till she find it.” It is not a light achievement. It was not a day’s work—it was not a week’s work—or a year’s work—the recovery of that soul of yours. Many an enterprise was begun and laid down again, and never ended by men, in that very interval which elapsed between the time when God—your faithful, untiring God—began to deal with your soul, and the time when He made you go to Him. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*)

The Church’s neglect of souls:—Sometimes, in visions of a mournful fancy, I seem to see this Mother-Church of ours sitting within her ancient and noble house, sitting as a woman exceeding fair, but very cold and still; and so she sitteth with her hands folded before her, as though she said to herself, “I shall be a lady for ever; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children.” And year by year, century after century, the dust falls and gathers, and falls in the silence around her, and all things are covered as with a shroud, and the precious coins are lost to sight and buried deep beneath. And then I seem to see her arousing herself at last from her long waking dream, and looking about with dismay for her lost treasures—bestirring herself to find them, sweeping the dust away here and there, bringing to light with busy toil many a shining effigy of the great King. And then I seem to hear indignant voices of those who clamour and storm against her for disturbing quiet things, and making unnecessary agitation, and raising an unpleasant dust; all the rich people, and the comfortable people, and the people that are well at ease, and all that have no care for souls—all are angry with her, and cry out to her, “Why can you not sit still as you did before, and if the dust falls, let it fall, and if the coins of the King be lost, let them be lost? only trouble us not, only do not vex our souls with all this stir and dust.” Once again I seem to see her that sometime sat as a queen and was not moved; I seem to see her disconcerted and perplexed, anxious to recover the lost, yet anxious not to give offence; I see her hesitate and quail, and lay aside her search with sorrow, and sit down again, but not at ease; I see the dust begin to fall and settle again, and fall and gather around her thicker and thicker, until every shining coin be lost beneath the growing litter of neglect. Last of all, I see a day arise, black with wind and rain, against that ancient house wherein the woman sits; I see the tempest of God’s anger loosed upon it, I see the lightning of His indignation launched against it; I see her crushed and buried beneath the wreck, among the silver pieces which she lost and did not find. (*R. Winterbotham, M.A.*)

The Oriental setting of this parable:—The touches about lighting the candle (or better, lamp, or light), sweeping the house, and seeking diligently, and calling the friends and neighbours together, are not without some pertinent modern Oriental illustrations. Most of the native houses are without glass windows, and are very dark when shut up. Often the windows are small, and sometimes kept shut, as a rule depending on the door for light. They are dark places. The floor, too, is often earth, or perhaps mortar, and very dirty. Where animals dwell with the family, as is very common, the dirt is such as is best left to the imagination. In such cases the particulars mentioned in verse eight are by no means superfluous. So, too, the calling of the friends and neighbours together. One of the difficulties in picking up the Arabic language among the common people is the paucity of subjects of conversation. Little is to be heard except bargaining among the men, and accounts of the most ordinary household operations among the women—except in the case of some rather public scolds, whose voices, without a particle of exaggeration, sounds to the Occidental like the falling and rattling of boards. The occasion of losing and finding a piece of money would be a piece of great good fortune to the gossips, as the writer has actually witnessed. It would be an incident for a nine days’ talk. And such terrible busybodies as they are! Every one knows, at least, all his or her neighbours’ business, and more besides, to an extent not readily defined. The woman who loses and finds a piece of money would not be long in calling her friends and neighbours together; nor would they be slow to come even uninvited. The babel of telling the story and commenting and congratulating is not to be imagined in our land. The talk could be heard a long distance. (*Professor Isaac H. Hall.*)

The ten pieces of silver:—In the three parables recorded in this chapter there is so evidently a pro-

gress and ascent of thought, they mount so naturally to a climax in their revelation of the redeeming love of God, that if at any point we fail to make that progress out, if we encounter anything in them which wears the aspect of an anti-climax, we are checked, disappointed, perplexed. And yet in the second of these parables there is at one point an apparent retrocession, where all else implies a forward and upward movement of thought. Every one can see how immense an interval there is between the one sheep lost out of a hundred, and the one son out of two, and that the younger—and in the Bible commonly the dearer—of the two. But where is the connecting link? How should the lost piece of money be dearer to the careful housewife than the lost sheep to the faithful shepherd, who knows and cares for every one of his flock and calleth them each by his name? One out of ten marks a great advance upon one out of a hundred indeed; but would it not be less to lose even ten silver coins than a single sheep—less in value, less in love? The answer to that question, the solution of the difficulty, is to be found in an Eastern custom, the application of which to the parable before us all commentators on it have, so far as I know, overlooked. The women of Bethlehem, and of other parts of the Holy Land, still wear a row of coins sewn upon their head-dress, and pendant over their brows. And the number of the coins is very commonly ten, as I, in common with other travellers, have ascertained by counting. The custom reaches back far beyond the Christian era. In all probability, therefore, it was not simply a piece of silver which was lost out of her purse by the woman of our parable, but one of the ten precious coins which formed her most cherished ornament; and this would be a loss even more vividly felt than that of the shepherd when one out of his flock of a hundred went astray. So that immense as is the advance from both the care of the shepherd for his sheep, and of the pride of the woman in the burnished coins which gleamed upon her forehead, to the yearning and pitiful love of the father for his prodigal and self-banished son, we can nevertheless find a link between the first and last terms of the climax, and trace an advance even between the grief of the shepherd over his stray sheep, and that of the woman over her lost coin. A piece of money in her purse might easily be stolen or spent; but a coin from the head-dress could not be so much as touched by any stranger, nor even taken from its wearer by her husband unless she cut it off of her own accord and placed it in his hands. It was safe, sacred, dear. It was a strictly personal possession, and might very well be an heirloom—like the “silvers” of the Swiss women—hallowed by many fond and gracious memories. (*A. G. Weld.*) *Broken harmony*:—If, as has been alleged, the ten pieces of silver form the bride’s necklace, and constitute a marriage token, like our wedding ring, the work of the whole is marred by the destruction of its unity. And thus we can gauge more accurately God’s loss by man’s sin. The oneness of the creative plan is broken. From those beings whom God made for the harmonious unfolding of His purposes, for the manifestation of His glory, and for the beautifying of His universe, one order has broken loose and impaired the symmetry and perfect working of the whole. (*J. W. Burn.*) *Lost to use*:—Whatever ornamental or symbolical uses this coin might serve, it was the Roman *denarius*, and had, therefore, a money value. Stamped with the monarch’s image and superscription, it was a means of purchase, and was capable of self-multiplication in the way of usury. So, made in the Divine likeness, man is the current coin of the Lord’s universe. He is so constituted in mind and body as to be of use to God in executing His sovereign purposes, and in multiplying himself in sought and rescued souls. No agency for these ends is comparable to man, and men failing in this high vocation are lost. And how many are thus lost? lost as utterly to usefulness as though they themselves, as well as their talent, were wrapped in a napkin and buried in the earth! And amongst them are many who are painfully anxious about their precious souls, but are lost because they act as though there were no precious souls but their own. For the solemn admonition of the Saviour holds good here: “Whosoever will seek to save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.” (*Ibid.*) *Lost in the house*:—What a meaning this parable has for those who are lost in a Christian home, school, sanctuary, and who, while neither blasphemers, nor infidels, nor libertines, and while maintaining a nominal connection with God and His cause, are lost! Lost to duty, with all around them conducive to consecration; lost to the love of God, while daily loaded with Divine benefits! (*Ibid.*) *The Spirit’s work in the soul*:—He is Christ’s fan and Christ’s fire. He thoroughly purges His floor and throws a lurid light on the sinner’s state. He sweeps away

the cobwebs of error by His powerful convictions, and pours the truth of sin and righteousness and judgment into the mind. He overturns the temple of formalism by the might of His power and lays bare the hollowness of those who worship God with their lips while their hearts are far from Him. The dust of self-deception flies as His sharp appeals to the conscience leave the self-deluded without excuse. Some dire affliction clears the soul of its worldliness, and the lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God are confronted with their doom. He strips the sham of all his dissimulation by the manifestation of the stern realities of God and of eternity, and demonstrates the futility of the profession of religion without the possession of its power. Often His work has to be repeated. Encumbrances removed are replaced and removed again. Hunted from one corner the sinner takes refuge in another, and is still pursued. Nor does the Spirit cease to strive with man until resistance becomes hopeless obduracy, and until the final quenching of His light leaves the sinner in outer darkness. (*Ibid.*) *The utility of disturbance*:—And as mere habit and neglect hide souls from themselves, and from the just sympathy and care of their fellows, God's Spirit sends its great disturbing agencies into the society, the nation, the age, or into the narrower bounds of the family. The besom does not really make the new dust; but it only brings the old and long-gathering deposit more, for a time, into the air and upon the lungs. The messengers of the gospel are, for the time, regarded as "turning the world upside down." Or God's providences in calamities, and wars, and social revolutions, show men the magnitude of past hereditary errors. The besom of judgment goes shaking society out of its torpor and equanimity. It was so in Luther's day, and in Calvin's. It was so in the Puritans of our ancestral Britain, and in their colonists who crossed to this country. God, by them, broke up many a pile of quiet litter; and brushed aside many a film of long-settled green mould, picturesque in its verdure, or venerable in its grey, hoar antiquity, which had gathered upon the national conscience. But a Bunyan, and a Milton, and a Baxter, and an Owen, and a Howe were precious medals brought out by the besoming; and constitutional freedom and national morality, and English literature, and Christian piety were greatly enriched by the agitation. It was so in the revolution that made us a nation. It was so in the agitations that went over Europe in the train of our first revolution. It was so in our last great struggle. It has been so in modern missions. Would you put that shaking and besoming peremptorily and effectually down? We hear, behind the turmoil and the thick streaming clouds of dust, as God's great besoms sweep along, the words of an august cry: "I will overturn, and overturn, and overturn until He, whose right it is to reign, shall come." (*W. R. Williams.*) *God's search for the lost*:—God is as incapable of being indifferent towards His lost mankind, as is a mother towards her lost child. Lost mankind are not only His lost, but His lost children. His piece of money is money indeed, for originally it came out of the mine of His eternal nature. Heathen poets, Christian apostles, and modern philosophy are agreed that mankind "are His offspring." And does not the Source of all hearts feel? And is He not concerned for His lost? In the Divinity of indifference I cannot believe. And yet I am strongly inclined to think that, to many, one great offence of the gospel is, that it is too gracious, too tender, too womanly. They can conceive God to have Almighty power, infinite wisdom and justice, but they cannot give Him credit for infinite affection. They know that a woman will light a candle and go into every hole and corner, stooping and searching, until she find that which she has missed; but they have no idea that this can be a true parable of God's concern for His lost children. They are not surprised to find a heart in my Lady Franklin: they are not surprised at any measures that she may set on foot to recover the lost one. They are not surprised that the British and American Governments should be concerned to seek, and if possible, to save Sir John and his crew. No one said, they are not worth the expense and labour of seeking, because they are few. Not far from a million pounds were sacrificed in this search. Besides money, good brothers were not found backward to expose their own lives to danger, in the distant hope of finding and relieving their missing brothers. Have the English Government and people so great a concern to recover their lost, and has God none? Better say that a drop contains more than the ocean, that a candle gives more light than the sun, that there are higher virtues in a stream than in its source, and that the creature has more heart than God. Otherwise confess, that the gospel is infinitely worthy of the heart of God; and never more imagine the great Father to find rest under the loss of His human family, in the consolation: "They are nothing compared with

My universe, they will never be missed." (*J. Pulsford*.) *Lost treasure*.—In the parable of the lost coin the first thing that strikes us is, that something considered of value had been lost. The lighting of the candle, the sweeping of the house, the diligent search, everything else being laid aside to attend to this matter, all showed that the thing lost was regarded as quite important. So when the soul of man becomes lost through sin, the most valuable object in the world is lost. Whether we reflect upon the soul's vast power of endless progress; its wonderful capacity of investigating the universe, from the lowest depths of earth to the highest star; its ability to hold converse and communion with the great God Himself, and there to find its highest delight; its rapidity of thought by which it can move through the universe in the twinkling of an eye; or the great interest that has been manifested in it by all heaven—we must see its amazing value. The exceeding value of man's soul is seen in what Jesus has done for it. Men often put forth great efforts for very insignificant objects. But when we see the Saviour leave His bright throne in the heavens, and become a homeless wanderer upon the earth, that He might save lost souls, we are able to form some estimate of the soul's value. Oh, yes; in Calvary we see how much is lost when the soul is lost! This is the precious thing that was lost. What a loss! The loss of reputation, of wealth, of health, of property, of life—all are nothing to such a loss as this. And such is man's position out of Christ. (*J. R. Boyd*.)

Ver. 10. Joy in the presence of the angels of God.—*Joy among the angels over repenting sinners*.—I. THE CLASS REPRESENTED AS BEING SPECIALLY EXCITED BY THE EMOTION OF JOY OVER A SINNER'S REPENTANCE. "The angels of God"—uncorporeal, immaculately holy, composed of various orders, active messengers of God to men. II. WHY DO THE ANGELS REJOICE WHEN A SINNER REPENTS? 1. Because true repentance culminates in that holiness of heart and life which is the chief glory of the angels. 2. Because the moral character of a sinner's influence is for ever changed by his conversion. 3. By repentance and conversion a sinner escapes eternal retribution for his sins, and secures moral fitness for eternal life. III. WHAT LESSONS DO WE LEARN FROM THESE FACTS? 1. That we manifest the spirit of the angelic race when we labour to lead sinners to Christ and rejoice over their conversion. 2. That the preaching with which the angels sympathize is of that type best calculated to bring sinners to repentance. 3. The appalling peril of a sinner over whose repentance no angels have rejoiced. Sin has but one logical issue—eternal death. Give the angels a chance to rejoice to-day over your repentance. (*S. V. Leach, D.D.*) *Heaven's joy over the repenting sinner*.—I. THE TRUTH HERE DECLARED. 1. The joy mentioned is special. 2. The joy is shared, originated by God Himself. II. THE CAUSE OF THE ANGELIC JOY. 1. A sinner. 2. Not the sinner while engaged in sin. 3. One sinner that repenteth. 4. Repentance stands before us here showing plainly two sides. (1) Produced by the grace of God. (2) A deliberate act on the part of the sinner. It is the confluence of these two streams that issues in true repentance. III. WHY SUCH GLADNESS SHOULD BE SHOWN. 1. When a sinner repents, God's purpose is effected. 2. Christ's kingdom is enlarged. 3. A soul is saved. Conclusion: 1. Behold the value of a single soul. 2. Observe the necessity of repentance. (*W. S. Bruce, M.A.*) *Angels and men*.—I. THE NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF ANGELS. Spiritual beings of high dignity and capacities. 1. Their might. They excel in strength. The army of God. 2. Their power. Great mental endowments. 3. Their purity. II. THEIR JOY AT THE RECOVERY AND CONVERSION OF SINNERS. 1. It proceeds from their superior knowledge of what man's place in the intelligent universe is: his Divine origin, and sublime destiny. 2. The conversion of a sinner brings joy to the angelic hosts, because thereby their liege Lord is honoured, His name exalted, His grace magnified, His rule acknowledged, and His word found not to have returned to Him void. 3. Their happiness is to see happiness, and conversion is the first step to a sinner's happiness. III. THE DUTY DEVOLVING UPON OURSELVES, TO DO THAT WHICH MAY AUGMENT BOTH THEIR JOY AND OURS. We must engage in good works, and endeavour, each in his own vocation and ministry, to lead sinners to repentance. (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *Angels joyful over the repentance of a sinner*.—I. VIEW THE SCENE ON EARTH WHICH THE TEXT SPREADS BEFORE US. What is its nature? To the carnal eye it presents nothing that is attractive or worthy of regard. It opens to our view, not an individual in a state of hilarity and mirth, indulging himself in sensual delights; but a poor weary, heavy-laden sinner, repenting of his transgressions. 1. Repentance includes brokenness of heart. 2. Self-abhorrence enters into the spirit of true

repentance. 3. Godly sorrow for sin is an essential ingredient of evangelical repentance. 4. The spirit of prayer is always associated with repentance. 5. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is connected with scriptural repentance. II. LET US GLANCE AT THE HEAVENLY SCENE. 1. Angels are benevolent beings; partaking largely of the moral qualities of the Deity, of the beneficence and compassion of His nature, they feel interested and delighted in whatever promotes the welfare and happiness of God's intelligent creatures. 2. Angels are joyful at the repentance of a sinner, because a splendid victory is achieved. 3. Angels are joyful at the event, because an immortal being is saved. 4. There is joy among the angels at this occurrence, because God is glorified in it—each person in the Trinity. (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *Angels rejoice over repenting sinners*:—I would employ this subject in order—I. To REMIND CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS OF CERTAIN DUTIES WHICH THEY OWE. We learn, then, from the words before us, that the repentance of sinners is, to these holy beings, an occasion of rejoicing; and this may be supposed to arise, in the first place, from the reverence and love which they indulge for the character and authority of God. In a kingdom where the sovereign, ruling in equity and in mercy, dwells generally in the affections of his loyal subjects, when rebellion and treason lay down their arms and sue for mercy, the circumstance is surely hailed by every loyal subject as a matter of sincere rejoicing. 2. The joy indulged by angels over the repentance of a sinner, may be considered as arising, secondly, from that spirit of benevolence, that love to human nature, which forms, of course, one principal feature in their character, as it is an attribute of that God, whom, in this respect as well as in others, they must be considered to resemble. They, therefore, rejoice over the repentance of a sinner, because it is the beginning of his own salvation, and also, because it is the beginning of blessedness which is likely to extend, in a greater or less degree, to all around him. 3. The joy indulged by angels over the repentance of a sinner may be considered as arising, thirdly, from the interest they take in the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom. 4. Another reason, probably, which has sometimes been referred to, why angels rejoice over the repentance of a sinner is, that they may have been instrumental, though in a way unknown to us, in bringing that sinner to repentance. For it has been said, there is nothing extravagant in supposing that He who so frequently employs, in the salvation of the souls of men, the instrumentality of human agents, should sometimes employ, though in a way unknown by us, the instrumentality of angels; and if so, we find in this circumstance another reason why angels indulge the joy referred to in the text, over the repentance of a sinner. II. That while these words supply admonition and instruction to Christian believers, they are ALSO DESIGNED AND FITTED TO SUPPLY ENCOURAGEMENT TO PENITENTS. III. BY WAY OF ADMONITION AND REPROOF, TO ADDRESS A WORD OR TWO TO THE IMPENITENT AND UN-CONVERTED. First of all observe what a contrast there is between the joy that angels express on the repentance of a sinner and your unconcern about your own repentance. Once more I would observe, still addressing myself to persons of the same description, if, according to the declaration of my text, there be "joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth," then may we not suppose that, if there be such a thing as joy in hell, there is joy there over every one that goeth on in his iniquity? (*J. Crowther.*) *The joy of heaven over a repentant sinner*:—I. In the first place, ATTEND TO THE EVENT ITSELF THUS EXPRESSED—"a sinner that repenteth." In the first part of this statement we are all included, being all sinners. From the second part we may be excluded, for we may not be all penitents. There are also stupid unconcerned sinners, who look no farther than the body. There are light-minded, careless sinners, whom sorrow never clouds, to whom pleasure in every form is welcome, and into whose hearts no serious thought ever enters. And there are worldly-minded sinners, who have no time, no inclination, and no leisure, for religion. There are also procrastinating sinners, who admit the necessity, but delay the duty, of repentance. Nay, there are even, in some measure, convinced and awakened sinners, whose convictions have not terminated in conversion. Like Cain, they complain, and they wander, and they reckon somehow, that God is hard, and that they are suffering more than they can bear. Like Esau, they weep, but it is for an earthly portion, and because they succeed not according to what they reckon due to their talents, their skill, or their industry. Or, like Ahab, they may clothe themselves in sackcloth, and sit in ashes, and walk steadily for a season, but still their hearts are not right with God. The repentance supposed is not a seeming but a real repentance, and is in complete harmony with the law and the gospel. The law is honoured by the terror

which it produces : the gospel is honoured by the peace which it maintains. God is obeyed, and the penitent himself praises God, and says, He hath delivered mine eyes from tears, my feet from falling, and my soul from hell. II. Let us proceed now, then, to meditate on the JOYFULNESS OF THE EVENT MENTIONED IN THE TEXT. "There is joy," says our Lord, "in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Think, then, in the first place, of the high character, of the high rank of the order of beings now spoken of as rejoicing—Angels, who occupy a higher place in the scale of creation than men. 2. In the second place, we may consider the intensity, the universality of the feeling that is produced. It might be true to say of the angels in heaven, that they rejoice, though the joy was but slight or transient, although it pervaded only a part of the heavenly host. The idea, however, conveyed to us here is the idea, not of a slight or of a transient, but of a deep and of a permanent impression, and it is the idea, moreover, not of joy only among a few, but of joy among all, of but one feeling and one expression of feeling, through all the innumerable company of angels. 3. Again we may think, in the third place, of the season at which such joy is stated as commencing, not when the sinner enters heaven, not when his repentance issues in eternal life. 4. I have only to state in the last place that each case of conversion is supposed here to be of sufficient magnitude to produce this joy. There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. Numbers are not necessary in order to convey to us the idea of value or importance. No doubt there was great joy on the day of Pentecost ; and when thousands were converted, no doubt there was great joy afterwards, when 5,000 were added to the Church ; no doubt there was great joy again, when a multitude of the priests and of the people believed ; but still each individual as marked in heaven's book, may be considered as a fit occasion for praising God, and as serving to minister to the delight of angels. Or we shall even take it in another light—you may suppose that one soul converted may, in special circumstances, or at particular seasons, or because of the individual character, be of great importance, even as the conversion of Paul included within itself the conversion of thousands—even as Paul was a chosen vessel, and took many from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. (*J. Geddes, D.D.*) *The birth of a soul a cause of joy* :—Let it admonish us to beware that we repine not at the bringing in of any into the state of grace. Shall heaven smile and earth frown ? Shall the angels be glad and we sad ? Shall we mock, scorn, deride, yea persecute our brethren for no other cause but this, that they have made heaven merry by their repentance and turning ? Wretched creature, cursed caitiff, that dares thus do. Is there not joy in the whole family upon the birth of a little infant ? Is not the father glad that a child is born unto him, the mother glad she is delivered, the servants glad that the family is enlarged, the children glad that their number is increased ? If any be discontented it is some baseborn, an Ishmael—the son of the bondwoman not of the free. (*N. Rogers.*) *Joy in heaven over repenting sinners* :—I. Who REJOICE ? 1. God the Father. 2. The Son of God. 3. The blessed angels. II. WHY DO THEY REJOICE ? 1. God the Father rejoices — (1) Because His eternal purposes of grace, and His engagements to His Son, are then fulfilled. (2) Because bringing sinners to repentance is His own work. (3) Because it affords Him an opportunity to exercise mercy, and show His love to Christ by pardoning them for His sake. (4) Because it gratifies Him to see them escape from the tyranny, and from the consequences of sin. 2. The Son of God rejoices—(1) Because He has given them their life. (2) Because in repenting they begin to return His love, and acknowledge the wisdom of His dispensations. 3. The angels rejoice—(1) Because God rejoices. (2) Because it is their disposition to rejoice in the happiness of others. (3) Because God is glorified and His perfections are displayed in giving repentance and remission of sins. Inferences : 1. From this subject we infer the incalculable worth of the human soul. 2. From this subject we infer that the consequence of dying in an impenitent state will be unspeakably dreadful. 3. From this subject we infer that all who repent will certainly persevere and be saved. Suppose, for one moment, that such may fall and perish ? Would God, would Christ, would angels then rejoice to see sinners repent ? 4. What an astonishing view does this subject give us of the benevolence of angels. Though they are perfectly happy, and though our character and conduct must to them appear inconceivably hateful, yet they forget themselves to think of us ; they forget their own happiness to rejoice in ours. 5. From this subject we may learn whether we are prepared for heaven. We presume

none will deny that preparation for heaven implies something of a heavenly temper. If, then, we are thus prepared we have something of such a temper. Like the angels, we are pleased with God's sovereignty, and rejoice when sinners repent. We desire and pray that the kingdom of God may come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (*E. Payson, D.D.*) *Joy of the angels*:—This assurance, coming from the lips of Jesus Himself, exhibits Christianity, both in its spirit and in its grandeur. I. THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANITY. The fact which Jesus teaches here is that gladness and surprise, that joy and gratified affection, with which love welcomes at last its alienated but unsundered objects. In one word, my friends, our Saviour, in the passage before us, shows the identity of the great sentiment of love in heaven and upon earth, in the depths of Divine love and in the heart of man. He appeals to those affections which are most profoundly interwoven in our being. He exhibits the spirit and power of the gospel as not above or foreign to the elements of our own consciousness, but intimately allied to it. He based this appeal upon that which can be demonstrated from the most familiar and common experience. But let me say further, under this head, that by the light of this central love and compassion we should interpret the different parts as well as the grand whole of the gospel. All the sayings of Jesus Christ are to be interpreted in harmony with that spirit; we must take the deep essence and substance of the gospel. We are to receive what grows out of that—what most accords with its general sentiment. And I say what most accords with the general sentiment of the gospel, with the deep spirit and substance of the gospel, is this simple doctrine, that God cares for the sinner, for the vilest and most abandoned sinner who is upon earth. In a mother's heart there is a love that cannot be altered and exhausted, and that will claim that abandoned sinner when he comes back. So in the Infinite bosom, and in the bosoms of all heavenly beings, their exists the same love; the spirit that sent Jesus Christ on earth is that spirit; the purpose of Christ's mission is to declare that spirit. That is the peculiarity of the gospel over and above everything else. Precisely where man's faith falls and man's hope falters, is it that the gospel becomes clear and strong. II. THE GRANDEUR OF CHRISTIANITY. Consider its grandeur as illustrated in the announcement of Jesus. The declaration in the text reveals two things—the nature of man and his spiritual relations. It exhibits man as a living soul, and as a member of the great family of souls. It strips away all conventionality from him. Christianity is primal democracy, lifted far above anything that either *pro* or *con* bears that name in our day as a party distinction. It is the great doctrine of man higher than his conditions, nobler than any material good. Why? Because he is a living soul; because within him there are deathless powers; because he is allied to God by a nature that no other being on this earth bears, and faculties that no other creature on this footstool possesses. And this is the source of its great achievement in modern civilization. Subtile theorists ask what Christianity has done for the progress of man. Christianity has thus sown the seeds of all progress, laid the foundation of all truth in government, and of all righteousness in society. It has been the master-key to all the grand efforts that man has made to be delivered from bondage, from oppression, from social wrong. It is the soul of liberty; it is the oriflamme that leads the hosts of humanity forward from effort to effort, to higher and higher social attainments. This is what Christianity has contributed to civilization and progress; it is the spring of all the noble efforts of all time. In the next place, it reveals the relations of man to the whole spiritual universe—his relationship to all spiritual beings. Christianity is the complement of scientific truth in the spiritual facts it reveals to us; and nothing is more grand than man's relation to spiritual beings—than the fact that the universe is filled up with blessed intelligences. I do not need to see them, or hear them, to be convinced of this fact; I know by surer sight than the eye, by more certain hearing than the ear, that they exist; I know it by my vital consciousness of a God and of a heaven. And Christianity interprets that fact. It shows man, poor, wretched, vile as he may be, linked with these innumerable relations. And what else does it show? It shows identity of nature in all spiritual things on earth and in heaven. Oh, if you could tear all the Bible in strips, but leave this one saying of Christ, what mighty truth and consolation there would be in it! "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." How much that reveals to us—lets in upon us. Joy in heaven! Then there are beings in heaven capable of joy, just like ourselves—beings in sympathy with us. Joy in heaven! Oh, forlorn and wayward brother! you are despised of men, and scorned, and perhaps feel that you ought to be; you have

sinned vilely and grossly; but do you know what you are? There might be joy not only in that earthly home that nestles among the hills where your poor mother is praying for you to-day, but also great joy in heaven. What a revelation of an identity of nature—of a celestial sympathy! Moreover, there is not only sympathy, but there is solicitude there. God is anxious for your return. (*E. H. Chapin, D.D.*) *Joy in heaven over a repentant sinner*.—I. THE OBJECT OVER WHICH ANGELS REJOICE. 1. A sinner. Vile, apostate, rebellious man. 2. A sinner in a particular state of mind. A sinner that repenteth. What is repentance? It is a state of mind adapted to our condition: such a disposition as is suited to our state. It is an affecting discovery of our situation, our wants, our danger. It is a bemoaning of our sad condition. With an almost broken heart the sinner comes to the Saviour's feet, crying, with emotions of heart never before felt, with emotions which no language can fully express—"O save me! I have sinned, I have sinned! O save me, or I perish!" II. THE GROUNDS OF THIS STRANGE JOY. 1. We may trace it to love. Love, when fixed on a right object, and exercised in a right manner, is a source of happiness. It is so on earth; and love makes heaven chiefly what it is as a world of joy. 2. Another ground of this joy of angels over a repenting sinner is their delight in the Divine glory. 3. They behold in the repentance of a sinner the advancement of the great work of grace, and receive in him a new pledge of its final accomplishment. III. THE PROBABLE REASONS FOR WHICH OUR LORD HAS MADE US ACQUAINTED WITH IT. 1. It was no doubt to vindicate His own conduct in calling and saving heinous transgressors. 2. It shows us that there is something in repentance which is pleasing to God—that there is something in repentance of an excellent character. 3. These things are recorded to comfort and encourage the broken heart. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *Repenting sinners, a source of joy in heaven*.—I. In the first place, then, WE HAVE THE SPECTACLE WHICH IS HERE PRESENTED, A SINNER REPENTING. Not the most noteworthy object, some of the wise ones of this world would be tempted to say—not the most noteworthy object earth could present to the eye of God. There are many fairer and brighter scenes upon earth to attract the regard of her God and King. Man's vagrant gaze is always wandering hither and thither in search of some scene of interest, or some form of beauty, on which for a moment it may rest; but who thinks of gazing with interest and hope, unless instructed out of the gospel of Christ, upon one sinner that repenteth? No; it is the halls of science, and the temples of art, and the statesman's cabinet, and the battle-field of nations, which centre all man's regard. Wherever the battle-cry of keenly conflicting interest is swelling on the ear, where brave words are being spoken, and brave deeds being done, thither man's eye restlessly turns. It is the rising and the setting suns of empire, the waxing and the waning tide of greatness; the rise, culmination, and decline of those stars that lead man's social progress; the chiefs and the heroes who are set far on in the van of the world—these offer to man the theme of his loftiest contemplations. And perhaps it is by the cradle of social reforms—it is by the birthplace of political revolutions and reformatations that man's purest and holiest vigils are held. My brethren, I am not here to deny the interest which may attach to any of these scenes or occasions. There is not one of these elements, so pregnant with future results to society, which are at work now, seething and surging in that great moral fermenting vat which we call society, that the angels do not look upon. That great battle which is being fought in every age, and perhaps never more earnestly fought than now—the battle which the ancients, for want of a better name, called the battle of the Gods and Titans—what we know as the battle of Chaos and Creation, Anarchy and Order, Might and Right, Slavery and Liberty—all these they look upon; nothing of this is hidden from their gaze. We do rightly to take deep interest in all these things, to let our hearts be stirred by them all. All these, God's angels look upon; nothing is hidden from their sight. But one thing they see through all these—amidst all these great interests of society—one thing they see, which for them has more momentous interest, because they see that it has more pregnant consequences; it is the spectacle of one sinner that repenteth, one poor man, it may be. All that interest, remember, is concentrated upon the individual. I say there is that man wrestling in the sweat and agony of his soul with his spiritual tyrants and task-masters, he is bidding them defiance, he is casting them forth; but no trumpet-call summons the world to be spectator of his conflicts. There is nothing to distinguish his battle, so as to attract the eye of the man of this world. No, it will be in silence, silence that sometimes gives no outward indications of what is passing—silence, perhaps, only

broken by these pleadings of a broken and contrite spirit, half uttered, half articulate, which God sees and answers as prayers—perhaps it may be thus that the repentant sinner will carry on and complete the work. Repentance is just the first stage and the first sign of that new life of the Christian, that life of which the Saviour said, “Ye must be born again”—that life which cannot come into a human spirit save by the work of God’s living Spirit within man’s heart. No man can work this transformation of himself, no man is strong enough to wrestle with this great monster of evil by himself. I say repentance is just the first stage of that new Divine life of which the Saviour spoke, in which a man, being freed from sin, has progressively his fruit unto holiness, and the end thereof life everlasting.

II. Direct your thoughts to **THE JOYFUL WATCHERS OF THE SPECTACLE HERE PRESENTED**. The progress of a soul through the various stages of its redemption excites, for the most part, very little interest upon earth. It connects itself with no great human interests, and it ministers no aid to purely human designs. But how differently is it regarded in heaven! Scribes and Pharisees, if they like, may mock at repentance; sophists and infidels, if they like, may jest at the penitent tear, or the pleading and struggling groan of a broken and contrite spirit; but I say to you, Christ says to you by my lips—I am speaking His own words—that “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over even one repenting sinner.” Brethren, we should teach ourselves to believe this. We cannot see it; nature does not seem to care for us; all we look upon seems to take little care for us in regard to our spiritual experience, but God and His angels watch us earnestly, and no sigh is breathed and no tear falls that is not caught and cherished by the spirits that are before the throne. I say this repentance, the soul turning away from sin by the power of the grace of Christ which it has received, awakens supreme interest, is a matter of intense importance to all dwellers in the spiritual world. Aye! as the soul thus rises from the dust to adorn herself with the only jewels that Christ cares for—jewels of penitence, humility, and charity—methinks there are God’s angels then harping with their harps, prepared to celebrate with vestal strains the indissoluble union of a repenting and ransomed spirit with its Lord. Those are the joyful watchers of the spectacle. III. Now, in the third and last place, in bringing these remarks to a conclusion, I dwell upon the rising interest to which I have already alluded more fully. Let us inquire **WHAT IS THE SECRET OF THIS INTEREST WHICH THEY FIND IN THE SPECTACLE OF A REPENTING SINNER**, and of their exulting joys. Of course we can only understand a portion of this matter, and only a portion of that portion can be brought within the limits of a brief discourse.

1. But, first, I should say that the angels of God who look upon all that is passing upon earth, all the scenes of interest that earth presents—scenes in which we are bound to take an interest, in which certainly the Christian ought not to be behind-hand in his interest as compared with his fellow-men—look upon a repenting sinner as the directest and completest result of Christ’s working upon earth, and, therefore, they abundantly rejoice. He who was with God, who was God, by whom all things were made, became flesh and dwelt among us; and here, in a sinner repenting, you have the directest result of His Incarnation. 2. A second reason is this. In a sinner repenting we must remember there is a rising up of a fresh witness to God’s righteousness, a fresh subject of God’s kingdom in the universe, and, therefore, do the angels rejoice. 3. Lastly, in a sinner repenting, the angels see the widening of the kingdom of the Redeemer. They see that He sees increasingly of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied, and, therefore, one thinks they rejoice. He is their King as well as ours; their Master as well as ours. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*) *Joy of the angels over even one repentant sinner*:—How loving are the angels to men; for they rejoice over one sinner that repenteth. There she is, in that garret where the stars look between the tiles. There is a miserable bed in that room, with but one bit of covering, and she lieth there to die! Poor creature! many a night she has walked the streets in the time of her merriment; but now her joys are over; a foul disease, like a demon, is devouring her heart! She is dying fast, and no one careth for her soul! But there, in that chamber, she turns her face to the wall, and she cries, “O Thou that savedst Magdalene, save me; Lord, I repent; have mercy upon me, I beseech thee.” Did the bells ring in the street? Was the trumpet blown? Ah! no. Did men rejoice? Was there a sound of thanksgiving in the midst of the great congregation? No; no one heard it; for she died unseen. But stay. There was one standing at her bedside, who noted well that tear; an angel, who had come down from heaven to watch

over this stray sheep, and mark its return; and no sooner was her prayer uttered than he clapped his wings, and there was seen flying up to the pearly gates a spirit like a star. The heavenly guards came crowding to the gate, crying, "What news, O son of fire?" He said, "'Tis done." "And what is done?" they said. "Why, she has repented." "What! she who was once a chief of sinners? has she turned to Christ?" "'Tis even so," said he. And then they told it through the streets, and the bells of heaven rang marriage peals, for Magdalene was saved, and she who had been the chief of sinners was turned unto the living God. It was in another place. A poor neglected little boy in ragged clothing had run about the streets for many a day. Tutored in crime, he was paving his path to the gallows; but one morning he passed by a humble room, where some men and women were sitting together teaching poor ragged children. He stepped in there, a wild Bedouin of the streets; they talked to him; they told him about a soul and about an eternity—things he had never heard before; they spoke of Jesus, and of good tidings of great joy to this poor friendless lad. He went another Sabbath, and another; his wild habits hanging about him, for he could not get rid of them. At last it happened that his teacher said to him one day, "Jesus Christ receiveth sinners." That little boy ran, but not home, for it was but a mockery to call it so—where a drunken father and a lascivious mother kept a hellish riot together. He ran, and under some dry arch, or in some wild unfrequented corner, he bent his little knees, and there he cried, that poor creature in his rags, "Lord, save me, or I perish"; and the little Arab was on his knees—the little thief was saved! He said—

"Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to Thy bosom fly";

and up from that old arch, from that forsaken hovel, there flew a spirit, glad to bear the news to heaven that another heir of glory was born to God. I might picture many such scenes; but will each of you try to picture your own? You remember the occasion when the Lord met with you. Ah! little did you think what a commotion there was in heaven. If the Queen had ordered out all her soldiers, the angels of heaven would not have stopped to notice them; if all the princes of earth had marched in pageant through the streets, with all their robes, and jewellery, and crowns, and all their regalia, their chariots, and their horsemen—if the pomps of ancient monarchies had risen from the tomb—if all the might of Babylon and Tyre and Greece had been concentrated into one great parade, yet not an angel would have stopped in his course to smile at those poor tawdry things; but over you the vilest of the vile, the poorest of the poor, the most obscure and unknown—over you angelic wings were hovering, and concerning you it was said on earth and sung in heaven, "Hallelujah, for a child is born to God to-day." (*G. H. Spurgeon.*) *Why should angels rejoice in the success of redemption?*—To this question we reply generally, that redemption is the mightiest display of the Divine attributes; and that, wrapt as angels are in admiration and adoration at their Maker, whatever sets forth His properties must be to them a fresh source of praise and ecstasy. Without doubt we must add to this general account, the affection which they entertain towards men as members of the family of creation, their consequent desire for their happiness, and their knowledge that happiness is secured by repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But probably the joy in question results mainly from the glory accruing to God, or from the manifestation which redemption puts forth of the attributes of Deity. And therefore we shall chiefly labour to show you how the scheme of our salvation was a new discovery of God to heavenly beings, and why, therefore, there should be joy in the presence of those beings whensoever a sinner takes hold of the obedience proffered in the gospel. Now, the wisdom, the power, and the goodness of God—under which all His other attributes are comprehended—these constitute the glorious majesty of our Creator; and of these, we are bold to affirm, our redemption is the noblest manifestation. If this be once proved, you will readily understand why angels rejoice over penitent sinners. Angels must be gladdened by every exhibition of the high prerogative of their Maker; and if redemption be signally such an exhibition, then redemption—as wrought out for all, or as applied to individuals—must signally minister to their joyousness. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *In the heavenly empire:*—A pious Armenian calling on Mr. Hamlyn, a missionary at Constantinople, remarked, that he was astonished to see how the people were waking up to the truth; how even the most cultivated

were seeking after it as for hidden treasure. "Yes," said he, "it is going forward; it will triumph; but, alas! I shall not live to see it, alas! that I am born an age too soon." "But," said Mr. Hamlyn, "do you remember what our Saviour said, 'There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth'? You may not live to see the truth triumphant in this empire; but should you, by Divine grace, reach the kingdom of heaven, and be with the angels, your joy over your whole nation, repentant and redeemed, will be infinitely greater than it could be on earth." He seemed astonished at this thought; but after examining the various passages to which I referred him, he yielded to the evidence with the most lively expressions of delight. "O fool, and slow of heart," said he, "to read the gospel so many times without perceiving such a glorious truth! If this be so, no matter in what age a Christian is born, nor when he dies." *The greatness of repentance*:—Repentance is a great thing, or the angels of God would not rejoice over it. It is no insignificant matter. If we did not understand it, and all the consequences that flow from it, and did not quite perceive all the reasons why angels rejoice, yet we should naturally conclude that it must be great from this fact. Suppose we entered a strange city and found the bells ringing out a merry peal from every tower, the cannon roaring out their harsh joy from every fort, the streets at night blazing with illuminations, every countenance cheerful, the whole land vocal with joy, and all keeping jubilee together; why, we should say, "This great and intelligent people would not rejoice thus over a trifle; some great thing must have taken place"; if we did not know what it was. Oh! enter heaven when a sinner has repented, and find it all jubilee! Must it not be a great thing that would fill heaven thus with bliss? The repentance of a sinner does it. And then mark, it is not the conversion of a nation like China, with its three hundred millions of inhabitants, nor India with its myriads of idolaters, nor blood-stained Madagascar, nor Tahiti, nor New Zealand: not the conversion of an empire, but the conversion of a single soul. Not merely the soul of some great persecutor, like Saul of Tarsus, whose conversion may at once change the aspect of a country, and release it from intolerance and murder, and introduce it to liberty and joy. Not the conversion of a mighty monarch, who, once a despot, is now become through Christianity the father of his country. Not the conversion of a philosopher, whose great name might be supposed to add celebrity to Christianity. Not the conversion of a great poet, who had prostituted his genius to celebrate vice, and now consecrates it to the glory of God who gave him the intellect. No, but the conversion of "a sinner," apart from all the personal circumstances in which that sinner might be found: any sinner; the inhabitant of a workhouse—the pauper's child—or the pauper himself; for it is repentance, stript of all that is adventitious, all that might otherwise gather around it. It is the dropping of all these, and it is the bowing down of any human heart in the attitude of submission to God, and in the purpose of forsaking sin: it is that, which angels rejoice over. (J. A. James.)

Vers. 11-32. A certain man had two sons. *The prodigal and his brother*:—**I. GOD'S TREATMENT OF THE PENITENT.** 1. The alienation of the heart from God. (1) Homelessness. (2) Worldly happiness is unsatisfying. Husks are not food. (3) Degradation. 2. The period of repentance. (1) The first fact of religious experience which this parable suggests to us is that common truth—men desert the world when the world deserts them. The renegade came to himself when there were no more husks to eat. He would have remained away if he could have got them, but it is written, "no man gave unto him." And this is the record of our shame. Invitation is not enough; we must be driven to God. And the famine comes not by chance. God sends the famine into the soul—the hunger, and thirst, and the disappointment—to bring back his erring child again. (2) There is another truth contained in this section of the parable. After a life of wild sinfulness religion is servitude at first, not freedom. Observe, he went back to duty with the feelings of a slave: "I am no more worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants." Any one who has lived in the excitement of the world, and then tried to settle down at once to quiet duty, knows how true that is. To borrow a metaphor from Israel's desert life, it is a tasteless thing to live on manna after you have been feasting upon quails. It is a dull cold drudgery to find pleasure in simple occupation when life has been a succession of strong emotions. Sonship it is not; it is slavery. A son obeys in love, entering heartily into his father's meaning. A servant obeys mechanically.

rising early because he must; doing, it may be, his duty well, but feeling in all its force the irksomeness of the service. Sonship does not come all at once. 3. The reception which a sinner meets with on his return to God. The banquet represents to us two things. (1) It tells of the father's gladness on his son's return. That represents God's joy on the reformation of a sinner. (2) It tells of a banquet and a dance given to the long lost son. That represents the sinner's gladness when he first understood that God was reconciled to him in Christ. There is a strange, almost wild, rapture, a strong gush of love and happiness in those days which are called the days of first conversion. When a man who has sinned much—a profligate—turns to God, and it becomes first clear to his apprehension that there is love instead of spurning for him, there is a luxury of emotion—a banquet of tumultuous blessedness in the moment of first love to God, which stands alone in life, nothing before and nothing after like it. And, brethren, let us observe—This forgiveness is a thing granted while a man is yet afar off. II. GOD'S EXPOSTULATION WITH A SAINT. The true interpretation seems to be that this elder brother represents a real Christian perplexed with God's mysterious dealings. We have before us the description of one of those happy persons who have been filled with the Holy Ghost from their mother's womb, and on the whole (with imperfections of course) remained God's servant all his life. For this is his own account of himself, which the father does not contradict. "Lo! these many years do I serve thee." We observe then: The objection made to the reception of a notorious sinner—"Thou never gavest me a kid." Now, in this we have a fact true to Christian experience. Joy seems to be felt more vividly and more exuberantly by men who have sinned much, than by men who have grown up consistently from childhood with religious education. Rapture belongs to him whose sins, which are forgiven, are many. In the perplexity which this fact occasions, there is a feeling which is partly right and partly wrong. There is a surprise which is natural. There is a resentful jealousy which is to be rebuked. And now mark the father's answer. It does not account for this strange dealing by God's sovereignty. It does not cut the knot of the difficulty, instead of untying it, by saying, God has a right to do what He will. He does not urge, God has a right to act on favouritism if He please. But it assigns two reasons. The first reason is, "It was meet, right that we should make merry." It is meet that God should be glad on the reclamation of a sinner. It is meet that that sinner, looking down into the dreadful chasm over which he had been tottering, should feel a shudder of delight through all his frame on thinking of his escape. And it is meet that religious men should not feel jealous of one another, but freely and generously join in thanking God that others have got happiness, even if they have not. The spirit of religious exclusiveness, which looks down contemptuously instead of tenderly on worldly men, and banishes a man for ever from the circle of its joys because he has sinned notoriously, is a bad spirit. Lastly, the reason given for this dealing is, "Son, thou art always with Me, and all that I have is thine." By which Christ seems to tell us that the disproportion between man and man is much less than we suppose. The profligate had had one hour of ecstasy—the other had had a whole life of peace. A consistent Christian may not have rapture; but he has that which is much better than rapture: calmness—God's serene and perpetual presence. And after all, brethren, that is the best. (F. W. Robertson, M.A.)

A mirror of mercy:—1. First, then, in that he is called a young man, there is noted in him want of knowledge and experience as the ground and fountain of all his folly, he knew not as yet what his father was worth unto him. And, therefore, he is not afraid to forsake him. This is to teach us that none forsakes the Lord, but such as do know Him not, and understand not that in so doing they forsake their own mercy. As beasts that know not the value of pearls care not to trample them under their feet, or as young children laugh at the death of their parents, because they know not for the present what they lose thereby, but afterwards remember it with grief; so blinded man without remorse runs away from God, not knowing what he lost by departing from the Lord, for He is light, and they go into utter darkness that go from Him. He is life, and they are but dead who abide not in fellowship with Him. One example of this we have in the elect angels; they are never weary to behold His excellent Majesty; they find ever new matter of joy in His face. 2. Secondly, in this prodigal child is noted here, that natural rebellion which is in all men; that they will not submit themselves to the will of God their Heavenly Father, but will follow their own wills. 3. The third evil noted here in this

prodigal is his hypocrisy; he calls him in word father, but in deed did not so account of him; he carried not toward him the heart of a child; this is a part of that poison wherewith Satan hath infected our nature. Is there any comparison between that which thou givest the Lord and that which thou gettest from Him? 4. That he seeks a portion of his father's goods, but not his father's favour and blessing, represents to us the earthly minds of naturalists, who prefer the gifts of God to God Himself. (*Bishop Couper.*) *The parable of the prodigal*:—Captain Sir W. E. Parry observes, "There is nothing even in the whole compass of Scripture more calculated to awaken contrition in the hardest heart than the parable of the Prodigal Son. I knew a convict in New South Wales, in whom there appeared no symptoms of repentance in other respects, but who could never hear a sermon or comment on this parable without bursting into an agony of tears, which I witnessed on several occasions. Truly He who spoke it knew what was in man." It is the prince of parables, a gospel within the gospel, a mirror of man, an artless yet profound little drama of human ruin and recovery. Wonderful, indeed, is its power to touch the sensibilities. "I have wept but once these forty years," said a veteran military officer, "and that was when I heard Jesse Bushyhead, the Cherokee preacher, address his countrymen from the parable of the Prodigal Son, the tears flowing faster than he could wipe them away." (*A. C. Thomson, D.D.*) *The parable of fatherhood*:—I. LET US FOLLOW THE SINNER IN HIS REBELLION. In this part of the picture we shall perceive that sin is vicious in principle, ruinous in operation, and ever multiplying its destructive issues. (I) SIN IS VICIOUS IN PRINCIPLE. 1. What is the unexpressed but fundamental axiom of all sin? A human being exists to pursue his own gratification, without regard to the will of God. That is it. 2. The younger son acts out the rule of life ascribed to him. For observe, the employment of the resources of existence for self-indulgence he claims as a right. "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." 3. Now definite plans for self-indulgence follow. His notions of life and felicity are not a theory, but meant to be a practice; and he does his best to be ready for it. 4. Notice, next, the haste of sin. "Not many days after, the younger son gathered all together." It might have been the most sublime and hallowed enterprise in the world. The rapidity of his movements must not be attributed exclusively to the impetuosity of youth, but to the precipitancy of all sinful passion. 5. Remark, finally, here, the presence of God is "unfriendly to sin." "And took his journey into a far country." Banishment from home would have been accounted a great hardship, if it had been enjoined as a duty. The toils and perils of the road would have occasioned no little murmuring, if his hard travail had contemplated any other end than self-enjoyment. He is eager to swallow his indulgences, and equally anxious to be beyond his father's eye and all the restraints of home. "Let me alone" is the impatient cry of sin to all remonstrance. "A far country" is always the coveted paradise of fools. (II) SIN IS RUINOUS IN OPERATION. "And there wasted his substance in riotous living." (III) SIN IS EVER MULTIPLYING ITS DESTRUCTIVE ISSUES. There is no standing still in good or evil. The wheels of human progress never rest on their axles. 1. Instead of attaining to happiness, he is overtaken by poverty. 2. Now Providence fights against him. Nature is in the universal league against transgression. 3. He is already feeling the pinch of wrong-doing. "And he began to be in want." The fruit of evil deeds is revealing its poison. He finds himself in the grasp of premonitory pangs. 4. Observe next, that the old principle is to be worked in new ways. "And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country." You see that he has not become a citizen himself. He is still a stranger. He cannot absolutely settle down out there. No. A man cannot find entire satisfaction in a life of self-enjoyment without God. With nothing but worldly things he cannot attain to rest. 5. He now sinks to a lower level of degradation. A swine-herd! 6. Take notice, further, that the swine-herd is prepared to accept his shame. "And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat." Ever since he left his father's house his inclinations have descended lower and lower. He tried to fill, to satisfy himself with them, but he could not. They merely stayed his hunger. There was a bitterness in their flavour which something in his palate nauseated. The pleasure of eating was gone. The food of a beast cannot satisfy the soul of a man. 7. Last of all, his schemes of felicity and methods of relief are all overturned together. "And no man gave unto him." It does not mean, that no man gave him swine's food. The swine-herd had the care of the husks, and ate plenty of them, but he could

not enjoy them. "No man gave unto him" what could satisfy and bless a human soul. Man is the highest creature in the world; but if you seek your happiness or your deliverance from misery at his hands, you must end in failure. "Citizens" out in that country, "far" from God, could not surround a prodigal with the good which a father's love at home can alone supply. "No man gave unto him," because no man had anything to give. II. LET US WATCH THE SINNER IN HIS REPENTANCE. There are four elements of repentance here requiring analysis. 1. REFLECTION. "And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare!" Sin creates a sort of moral insanity. While spurred by appetite and in the race after indulgence, the mind is actuated by a species of frenzy. "I perish with hunger!" There is the memory of a better past in that exclamation. This same recalling of brighter hours bows the spirit into the dust.

"This is truth the poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things,"

Bygone years to a sinner, however ill his beginning, is a glance up an ascending incline towards sunnier days. 2. RESOLUTION. "I will arise and go to my father." He no sooner discerns his hapless state, than he determines to leave it. You are to imagine him prostrate, brooding in indecision or despair. But he will lie no longer in inaction. He protests, "I will arise," and he rises. 3. RECOGNITION OF GUILT. His resolution, while unenfeebled by hesitation, was not formed in insensibility to his evil. He sees most distinctly the relation of sin towards God and towards himself. (1) The relation of sin towards God. "I have sinned against heaven." Evil insults the purity and despises the love of God. It destroys His moral order, and spurns the felicity which He offers. (2) The relation of sin towards himself. "And am no more worthy," &c. His sense of ill-desert is real and deep. 4. RETURN TO GOD. His was no empty vow. III. LET US BEHOLD THE SINNER IN HIS RESTORATION. 1. NOTICE GOD'S RECOGNITION OF THE EARLIEST BEGINNINGS OF PENITENCE. "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him." He had not seen his father, but "his father saw him." Unconsciously to the son, the love of the father has been drawing him all the way. If he had lost the image of his father from his memory, he would never have attempted to return. 2. OBSERVE GOD'S WELCOME TO THE REPENTING. (1) The tenderness of God is wonderful. He "had compassion." Great reason had God to be angry with that sinful creature, with me, with you; but He "had compassion." (2) How willing God is to succour! "His father saw him, and had compassion, and ran" to welcome him. "Ran,"—willingness is too feeble an epithet to denote the impulse. There is eagerness in "ran." God is hasting to save and bless. (3) Pray do not overlook God's readiness to accept and pardon just as you are. "Saw," "had compassion," "ran," "and fell on his neck, and kissed him." 3. NOW TURN TO BEHOLD HOW GOD LAVISHES HIS AFFECTION ON THE ACCEPTED PENITENT. The father is not going to treat his son as an "hired servant." God's forgiveness must be God-like. God's love is always greater in experience than in our most sanguine wishes and brightest hopes. 4. LISTEN TO GOD'S EXHORTATION TO HIS UNIVERSE TO SHARE HIS JOY. "Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry." "Merry" is an old Saxon word. Its meaning has somewhat narrowed and lowered in our later tongue. "Be merry," here, in the original is "rejoice." A feast betokens gladness among all nations. The occasion is great, and great is to be the exultation. "Let us eat and rejoice." The father does not ask his household to be glad and he himself remain only a spectator of the universal delight. It is, "Let us eat and rejoice." It is God's own joy that He would have His creatures share and proclaim. (*Bishop Alexander.*) *The prodigal son*.—I. AN EXHIBITION OF THE CONDITION AND THE CONDUCT OF MAN IN HIS NATURAL AND SINFUL STATE. 1. Absence of gratitude, or any sense of obligation to his father. 2. Impatience of his father's government. 3. Breaking away from his father's control. 4. Squandering his father's property contrary to his father's intention. 5. But his schemes all failed to make him happy. II. WHEN MEN BEGIN TO FEEL THEIR WANT, THEY TAKE ERRONEOUS COURSES TO DELIVER THEMSELVES. One flies to his worldly companions; another to scepticism; another to business; another to pleasure; another to some external reformation; another determines to read his Bible a little more, and to pray a little more—not meaning by prayer his heart really coming back to God, but the utterance of some words and going more frequently on his knees. That is not prayer. Prayer is the child

coming back to his Father; prayer is the heart meeting God; prayer is the heart delighting in God, pouring out its desires into the bosom of infinite Love, and feeling that God is there. You must get back to God through the mediation, the merit, and the sacrifice of the Lord our Righteousness and our Redeemer. All other refuges will fail: all other processes will fail: you may have convictions, and then you may do this, that, or the other that I have described; still you are in want. Husks, husks, husks are all you have received by staying away from your Father's house. III. THE NATURE OF REPENTANCE AND SUBMISSION—the way to get home to our Father. The young man is said to have come to himself: that means that he was beside himself before. Hence you find that the Word of God denominates sinners "fools": and because they are practically so foolish, they would rather remain undisturbed in their sins for a few days, than go through the bitterness of repentance and the self-denial of religion now, that they may wear an eternal crown, and live in immortal peace. There is another proof of the derangement of the human heart. It is the feeling which men have, that they can be happy away from God, and that they know more about the secret of happiness than the God who made them. So repentance is turning to our right mind. Repentance is beginning to look at things aright—beginning to reason, and feel, and purpose, and act aright. The young man determines to come home, to confess his sin without any palliation. The willingness to humble ourselves, that is coming home. Look for a moment at this young man, and see how difficult it was for him to come home, and how impossible it would have been, if he had not humbled his pride. In the first place he had to go back in his rags. "There is not a child in the village but will see me; and they will say, That is the young man who went out in such splendid style; and they will point the finger at me and mock me": and yet says he, "I will arise and go." IV. GOD'S RECEPTION OF THE RETURNING SINNER. (*E. N. Kirk.*) *The efficacy and joy of repentance*.—I. THE PARABLE. It can stand the two tests which Byron declared to be decisive upon the merit of literary creations. It pleases immediately, and it pleases permanently. The rose needs no essay to prove that it is a rose. This is fragrant with the breath of Christ, and coloured with the summer of His touch. 1. The prodigal's sin. (1) In its origin it is selfishness. (2) In its progress it is dissipation. (3) In its result, sin is famine and degradation: in action, the life of the sty, which is sensuality; in thought, the system of the sty, which is materialism. One of the citizens of that country sends him "into the fields to feed swine." (4) But the essence of his sin is the miserable determination to remove as far as possible from his father's presence. 2. The prodigal's repentance. "He came to Himself." He had been outside his true self before. When a man finds himself, he finds God. 3. The reception of the lost son. For every step the sinner takes towards God, God takes ten towards him. We will not dwell upon the particulars of that great reception. Enough to mention "the first stole"; the ring of honour; the shoes forbidden to slaves; the sacrificial feast; the father's voice passing into the chant of a wondrous liturgy; and seen and heard across the darkening fields by the elder brother as he unwillingly faces homeward the long line of festal light, the symphony of instruments, and the choirs of dancers. II. CHARACTERISTICS OF REPENTANCE. 1. Its efficacy. Not in the nature of things; not inherent in it. The sinner is in an awful land, where every rock is literally a "rock of ages"; where the facts which some men call spiritual are bound by a fatal succession quite as much as the facts which all men call material; where God is frozen into an icicle, and no tender touch of miracle can come from His law-stiffened fingers; where two and two always make four, and your sin always finds you out. To remove this impotence and inefficacy of repentance, Jesus lived and died. Repentance is His indulgence, flung down from the balcony by our great High Priest. Repentance is His gift; the efficacy of repentance is His secret. 2. Its joy. (1) There are two considerations which have always been urged by masters of the spiritual life. (a) To judge the inner life only by the joy of which it is conscious is a sort of spiritual epicureanism. "The tears of penitents are the wine of angels"; but they were not intended to intoxicate those who shed them. (b) Past sin, even when its guilt is pardoned, has penal consequences upon the inner life. It continues in the memory with its poisoned springs and in the imagination with its perilous susceptibilities. (2) Yet they know not the mind of God to whom penitence is only bitter. There are

"Tears that sweeter far
Than the world's mad laughter are."

There is a triumphant, a victorious delight, which leads the will along the narrow way, and will not be gainsaid. It is a mutilated *Miserere* which omits the verse—"Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice." By one of those apparent contradictions which lies at the root of the Christian life, a perpetual yearning after pardon is consistent with a perpetual serenity of hope. God would mould His penitents that they may combine sorrow with joy; that they may hear at once a sigh in the depths of their souls, and a music far away. There must be in the renewed nature something of the iron that has been moulded in His furnace, and something of the rose which has been expanded in His sunshine. The life of Frederick the Great, by a writer of transcendent genius, contains incidentally a record of the death of an English general defeated in Canada. Twice only did the unhappy officer rouse himself out of the mortal stupor into which he fell from a broken heart. Once he sighed heavily—"Who would have thought it?" Many days after he said with more animation—"Another time we will do better." And then "the cataracts of soft, sweet sleep" rushed down upon the weary man. Do not these two sentences give us this view of the twofold aspect of repentance?—the first, the humiliation of the beaten soldier as he comes to himself; the second, his hope through Christ as he catches the music of the march of victory. (*Bishop Wm. Alexander.*) *The pearl of parables*:—

I. WE SHALL NEED TO GROUP TOGETHER AT THE OUTSET THE PARTICULARS WHICH SHOW THIS YOUNG MAN'S ALIENATED CONDITION AT THE MOMENT WHEN THE STORY GIVES HIM INTRODUCTION (see vers. 11, 12). 1. He was estranged from all love for his father. His affections had been soured and turned before he made this abrupt demand. He addressed his father as to a division of his estate in a cool, technical way. 2. He was away from his home (see ver. 13). His father's residence which he had left is pictured in the parable, with the family life in it, by two or three strokes of a master hand. Even the servants had enough and to spare. Feasts were not unknown. Music and dancing were part of the entertainment. But it is plain that the old father meant to be master there; and that was precisely the condition of life this impulsive youth resolved to escape. 3. He had fallen into poverty (see ver. 14). Removed from influences which had hitherto kept him in check, he began the career of a profligate and debauchee. A little time spent in this voluptuous folly sufficed to run through his fortune. 4. At last he sank to the lowest, and became a servant. He went and offered himself to a master. The citizen of that country put him at the very worst business he had for any menial to do. 5. At this moment the young man was actually starving in the presence of his beasts (see ver. 16). So far from having the right to despise the lowly creatures of his charge, the prodigal began the rather to envy them. The picture must be turned now to show just how it illustrates the condition of a sinner alienated from his Father in heaven. His own pride of heart lies at the bottom of his departure; he wants to be master of himself. Gathering together all his resources of time, talent, energy—all his powers of mind and body—he rushes away into the world of dissipation and lust. Now he goes to the devil directly and hires himself out, and Satan accepts him at his own valuation, and puts him among the swine. II. LET US NOW SEEK FOR THE PARTICULARS WHICH DISPLAY THIS PRODIGAL'S ENTIRE CHANGE IN PURPOSE AND FEELING BY WHICH HE WAS AT LAST LED BACK TO HIS HOME IN PENITENCE AND PEACE (see ver. 17). 1. First of all, he began to think. "I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies." The expression here is as singular as it is strong—"When he came to himself." A sort of madness was in his heart. He sees where he is, and what he is, and what he has so long been doing. 2. Then he began to remember. That is Scripture counsel for us in these later times—"Remember from whence thou art fallen." The prodigal recollected the kindness of his home in the days gone by. 3. Then he began to regret. His grief over the wickedness of his career is shown by the softness and gentleness of his forms of meditation. We discover no demonstrations of spite. 4. Then he began to hate. Abruptly, but for ever, he throws up his engagement with his cruel master. He renounces absolutely all the associations of his life in this far country. 5. Then he began to resolve (see vers. 18, 19). So critical is this as a point in his experience, that we must analyze it step by step to the end. (1) He resolved he would arise. If he was actually bent on making a change, he must be up on the instant and out of this. Nothing could be gained by delay. (2) He resolved he would go to his father. To whom else could he go? Drudgery was here, freedom was yonder. Shame was here, honour was yonder. Slavery was here, duty was yonder. Starving was here, plenty and to spare were yonder. (3) He resolved to speak to his father.

Observe, in this little speech he says over and over again to himself there is not one word about food or raiment, or future fortune. He is going to get the awful past right before he begins on anything else. He decides that he will confess before he begins to plead; what he wants is pardon. (4) He resolved to be obedient to his father. Unworthy of sonship, he will ask for a servant's place. Indeed, now he has come to see that the lowest position in his father's house is higher than the highest he ever discovered in all these reckless, wicked days since he left it. Here, again, we must pause to turn the story, so as to see in all plainness how it illustrates the process of mind and behaviour through which a contrite sinner returns to his Father in heaven in the hour of his resolve. These steps are all homeward steps. III. There remains for our study now only one more grouping of particulars which show THIS PRODIGAL'S RECEPTION WHEN AT THE LAST HE ARRIVED IN HIS OWN COUNTRY, AND CAME TO HIS FATHER'S HOUSE. 1. He carried out his purpose of arising and going to his father (see ver. 20). It would have done no good just to resolve and then sit still there among the swine. 2. He carried out his purpose of confessing his sin to his father (see ver. 21). Perhaps he had been fainting with hunger; but hope would tell him of comfort by and by. Perhaps he would meet a train of travellers, who would laugh at his sorry look and condition; but he would think of help coming before long. Perhaps his heart wholly sank at the moment when from the last hill he saw his home; but he would be sure to fall back on his sure faith in his father's affection. 3. He carried out his purpose of full obedience of his father. To be sure, not a word was said about his being a servant any more. He was a son now, and all the old honour had come with the robe and the ring. But the unspoken resolve still remained in his heart (see Heb. v. 8). (C. S. Robinson, D.D.) *The prodigal son*.—I. THE SON'S FORTUNE, AND HIS WAY OF SPENDING IT. What, then, was his fortune? Man is gifted with health, by which he is able to enjoy life—strength, to provide for its necessities—faculties (such as common sense, reason, the understanding), to guide him to God as his true happiness—affections, to endear him to others, and others to him. Appetites of various and valuable sorts. The appetite of eating and drinking, which affords legitimate pleasure and real advantage when moderately indulged; the appetite for seeing, which opens a door to much useful discovery and delight, which enables us to admire on every hand the infinite wisdom, power, and goodness of our Creator and our God; the appetite for hearing, by which Divine knowledge gets admittance into the soul, by which the agreeable converse of our friends, and the delightful strains of heavenly melody, may be enjoyed and indulged in. These, and many others, are precious items in the portion which God bountifully bestows upon His children. They should be enjoyed at His discretion, according to His command, and for His glory. Not so, however, the sinner. Like the prodigal, he gathers his riches, and takes his journey into a far country—that is to say, he wanders far from God and heaven. The prodigal becomes a worldling; he carries his portion into the unregenerate world, and there wastes his substance in riotous living. His gifts are debauched and misused; they are all made the servants of sin. Hunger caters to gluttony; thirst to drunkenness; the eye administers to lust; it reads wicked looks, delights in wanton shows, in pomp, and vanity, and folly. The ear drinks in blasphemy, irreligion, and indecency. The heart is made the residence of evil affections; the head and understanding, of wicked, ungodly, infidel principles. The summer of life is spent in bringing to maturity the seeds of evil which were scattered in its spring—the autumn, in the neglect of what is good, and in the ingathering of what is bad, the poisoned fruits of a debauched manhood. The winter of life comes on, and in its train sharp disease, racking pains—a bloated, enfeebled, disordered carcass—a foolish head, an unregenerate heart, a guilty conscience. There is now no more capacity for enjoying pleasure; the sight is gone, the hearing lost, the appetite vanished, the strength decayed, the health squandered, the affections debased, the faculties degraded—the whole substance wasted in riotous living. II. HIS DESTITUTION AND REPENTANCE. “And when he had spent all there began to be a mighty famine in that land.” So it is with sinners. They derive their pleasure from sensual enjoyments—the indulgences of the flesh; but, when they spend their strength, there is an end of these indulgences. The eye refuses to see, the ear to hear, the members to stir, in obedience to the miserable slave of sin. “And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat.” It is among the miseries of sinners that the appetite for wicked indulgence increases as the capacity for gratifying it decays. The longer the heart has been exercised in iniquity, the deeper will be the corruption with which it is tainted. “And no man

gave unto him." Be assured, sinner, this is a true picture of the world. While you can treat them—while you have anything that they can devour, they will praise and flatter you; but, when your substance is gone, you will find it true that no man will give unto you—none of your sinful companions. They have their own devouring lusts, their filthy lusts, to gratify. Do you think that they will deny themselves for your necessities? "And when he came to himself"—mark the expression, as though he had been in a fit of madness. It is thus the sinner is here spoken of; yea, and elsewhere the Holy Ghost says, "Madness is in their hearts while they live." "I will arise," &c. Here, then, were no excuses, no palliations—no saying others were in fault, I was led astray, I have not been as bad as some—no promises of great things for the future—no saying, I will devote myself to thy service, I will fight thy battles, I will do wonders for thy cause; but a simple declaration of guilt and wretchedness: "I have sinned, I am unworthy; I do not deserve the character of thy son; make me as one of thy servants; regard me as one of them." He resolves to plead, not his merit, but his misery, and he puts his resolve into execution. For—III. "HE AROSE AND CAME TO HIS FATHER." "He arose and came": it is important that you should mark this—he did not rest content with mere resolutions of repentance. He did not say, "I will arise and return," and all the while stay where he was, desiring still to feed on husks. This too many do. "And while he was yet a great way off," &c. Oh, the melting tenderness of our God and Saviour! He watches the very first movements towards repentance. (*T. D. Gregg, M.A.*) *The reformed prodigal*:—I. LET US INQUIRE WHO THE YOUNGER SON IS INTENDED TO REPRESENT. The parable is addressed to the scribes and Pharisees; but there was nothing in their character which resembled what is ascribed to the younger son, or that could admit a comparison with him. But, as we are told, it was delivered in the presence of publicans and sinners, who had assembled in crowds to hear Jesus, it cannot be doubted that it was that class who are portrayed by the younger son. The publicans and sinners are never represented in the Gospels as influenced by the religious opinions which prevailed among the Jews, but rather as led by their feelings; just as the younger son is exhibited in the parable. They are, however, drawn as more easily instructed, and more susceptible of repentance and reformation.

II. LET US NEXT POINT OUT WHAT USEFUL INSTRUCTION WE MAY DERIVE FROM THE CONDUCT OF THE YOUNGER BROTHER. 1. We see that extravagance and licentiousness are usually followed by want. Whoever, then, practices these vices, cannot plead ignorance of their natural and unavoidable consequences. Nor do evil effects belong to these vices alone; for every other vice has its peculiar evil consequences which accompany its train, as uniformly as a shadow goes along with a moving substance when the sun shines. Thus, even truth from the mouth of a known liar is usually received with incredulity, and always with suspicion. Pride is incessantly exposed to imaginary affronts and real mortifications, which cause to the unhappy victim many agonizing moments. The vain man is miserable when he is doomed to negligence and contempt, instead of receiving the coveted and expected praise. The gratification of revenge, in reality, consists of the pains of the rack. 2. As the evil consequences of sin are thus so evident to all, we ought to be convinced that this knowledge was intended to lead us to amendment. Such, indeed, is represented as the effect produced on the young man in the parable. His sufferings occasioned not only that repentance which consists in strong feelings, but that reformation which consists in a change of conduct. This is exhibited as genuine and sincere; it was speedy, nor was it partial but universal. III. OUR ATTENTION IS NEXT CALLED TO THE ELDER BROTHER. We have concluded that the younger brother was designed to represent the publicans and sinners. Nor can we have any doubt that, under the similitude of the elder brother, the scribes and Pharisees are intended. It is true the character given of the elder brother is good—that he had served his father many years, and never transgressed his commands. But we must not overlook the circumstance that this favourable character is given by himself, while his conduct exhibits an opposite picture, bearing a close resemblance to the scribes and Pharisees; for they deemed themselves not only faultless but meritorious, as they are represented by the Pharisee in the parable, who thanked God for his superiority to others, and plumed himself because he fasted twice in the week, and gave tithes of all his possessions. Like the great body of the Pharisees, the elder brother is selfish and indifferent about others. He is angry at the fond reception given to his penitent brother, envious of the marks of favour conferred on him, and mortified at the supposed preference to himself

by his noble-minded father. Had he possessed any natural affection he would have cordially testified his delight at the return of his long-lost brother. Had he felt as he ought to have done, he would have learned that his own happiness was highly enhanced; for there is no joy so elevated and refined as that which a good man feels at the return of a son, or a brother, or a friend, to God and duty. IV. Lastly, THE CONDUCT OF THE FATHER IN THE PARABLE IS EVIDENTLY INTENDED TO REPRESENT THE GOODNESS OF OUR ALMIGHTY FATHER. (*J. Thomson, D.D.*) *The prodigal son*:—1. This young man was laying his life-plans, and his first idea was to get away from his father. 2. Freedom from restraint leads to recklessness. 3. Recklessness leads to want. 4. Want leads to recollection. 5. Recollection leads to repentance. 6. Repentance leads to reformation. 7. Reformation leads to restoration. 8. Restoration leads to rejoicing. 9. Rejoicing over the returning prodigal is well; but the conduct and character of the elder brother are immeasurably better. (*T. Kelly.*) *The parable of the prodigal son*:—I. SELF WILL LEADS TO PRODIGALITY. II. PRODIGALITY LEADS TO WANT. III. WANT AWAKENS MEMORY. IV. AWAKENED MEMORY LEADS TO REPENTANCE AND RETURN. (*Geo. Gerrard.*) *The prodigal*:—Let us regard it as giving a picture of man—I. IN THE DIGNITY OF HIS ORIGIN. This young man was the son of a father who could bestow on him a large fortune, and surround his life with comfort and splendour. He was born to dignity. The destitution and misery to which he had reduced himself was not his natural heritage. "We are also His offspring." II. IN HIS DESIRE FOR INDEPENDENCE. All sins may be regarded as the unfolding of this single sin of selfishness. Hence the necessity that we should enter the Kingdom of God, where He asserts and maintains His dominion over us. III. IN THE LIBERTY ALLOWED HIM, WITH THE RISK OF ITS ABUSE. When a man feels that the service of God is not perfect freedom, that he can better himself in some condition of his own seeking, God allows him to make the trial. The foolish experiment discovers at length to him that he is not really free by throwing off his former yoke. He has but exchanged it for a far heavier one. 1. We learn from this that the apostasy of the heart begins before the apostasy of the life. 2. Man abuses the liberty allowed him, and abandons himself to the dreadful possibilities of sin. Liberty is indeed a noble endowment, yet it is terrible to have the power to ruin ourselves. We can gain nothing by contending with our Maker. IV. IN THE MANNER OF HIS SPIRITUAL RECOVERY. This recovery is possible. Such is the glad sound of the gospel. Let us trace the steps by which the prodigal gained the favour he had forfeited. 1. He was made to feel his utmost need. 2. His reformation commenced in thought. 3. He was sensible of the honour he had rejected. 4. He resolves to cast himself upon the mercy of his father. 5. He frames the design of his confession. Sin is acknowledged in its root—"before Thee." 6. Still remaining as a son, he desired to be reckoned a servant. V. IN THE MERCIFUL KINDNESS WITH WHICH HEAVEN FORGIVES THE EVIL OF HIS LIFE. God draws nigh unto those who draw nigh unto Him. When the face is turned towards God, the long journey is relieved by the arrival of mercy before we have trodden every weary step. 1. The penitent is raised to a position of honour. 2. There was sympathy awakened for him in the father's household. 3. The joy was suited to the time—"it was meet." But this intensity of joy could not, in the nature of things, long continue. He, too, must shortly settle down to the sober tasks of duty. The excitement of a great crisis must not be the permanent condition of the soul, or her energies would be consumed at too high a rate; and, instead of the glow of health, there would be the burning of a fever. Excessive joy must subside into the patience of faith, and the labour of love. (*The Lay Preacher.*) *The parable of the prodigal son*:—I. THE PRODIGAL SON LEAVES HIS FATHER'S HOUSE. 1. Why did he leave? (1) Youth is the time of imaginations. The prodigal son promised to himself a joyful life outside of his father's house. (2) Youth is desirous of sensual pleasures. (3) Youth desires to be independent, and will not obey. 2. How did he leave? (1) The ungrateful demand. (2) The going astray. II. THE PRODIGAL SON IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY. 1. He wastes his substance. 2. He begins to be in want. Poverty is the condition of the soul that seeks happiness in the world. By losing his God, the sinner loses everything. 3. His degradation. He who would not perform the daily work in the house of his father, is now obliged to labour as a hired servant. 4. He envies the brute beasts. III. HIS RETURN AND RECEPTION. 1. The causes of his return. (1) It was caused by his misery. The famine calls him back whom satiety had led away. God visits with grace him whom He visits with affliction. (2) Forsaken by all the world, he returned to himself. The first condition of con-

version is knowledge of one's self, and the knowledge of the condition of our soul. (3) He saw the misery of his condition. 2. The steps he takes in order to return. (1) He makes a firm resolution, not deferring his return to a later time, nor being deterred by difficulties. (2) He still remembers the kindness of his father. (3) He acknowledges the enormity of his sin. 3. His reception. (*Repertorium Oratoris Sacri*.) *The prodigal son*:—Look at the prodigal son—I. IN HIS ORIGINAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF HONOUR AND HAPPINESS. Upright. Innocent. Happy. God his Father. Eden his home. The earth his domain. Angels his companions. All that Divine wisdom and love could provide, he possessed. An ample portion was his inheritance. II. IN THE ARROGANCE OF HIS PRESUMPTUOUS CLAIM. What did he really want? Where could he be more dignified or happy? But he seeks to have his portion to himself. He desires to do with it as he pleases. He seeks to throw off parental restraints and control. III. IN HIS DISSIPATED WANDERINGS. 1. This wandering is very gradual and insidious. 2. Increasingly rapid. 3. Awfully dangerous. IV. IN HIS WRETCHEDNESS AND MISERY. Prodigacy is followed by want; extravagance by misery. V. IN HIS UNALLEVATED DISTRESS. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *The prodigal's return*:—I. REASON RESUMES HER DOMINION. II. THE RESOLUTION HE ADOPTS. 1. He determines on an immediate return to his forsaken home. 2. He resolves freely to confess his sins. 3. He resolves to be content with any place in his father's dwelling. III. THE COURSE WHICH HE PROMPTLY CARRIES OUT. 1. Immediately; without delay. 2. And he perseveres in his homeward course. (*Ibid.*) *The sequel*:—I. THE HAPPY MEETING. II. THE HEARTY RECEPTION. III. THE DISTINGUISHED BANQUET. IV. THE COLD-HEARTED ENVY OF THE ELDER BROTHER. LESSONS: 1. How generous and pure is the benevolence of the gospel. It is of God, and from Him, and resembles His tender and infinite love. 2. How hateful is an envious self-righteous spirit. It is the spirit of the evil one, and therefore from beneath. 3. Happy they who have repented of sin, and who have been received into the Saviour's family of love. (*Ibid.*) *The prodigal son*:—I. THE PRODIGAL'S DEPARTURE. He disliked all parental restraint. He broke the principle involved in the "first commandment with promise." In his father's house vice was out of place. He made the world his servant, little thinking how soon he should be under its most cruel tyranny. He was sadly deceived. We must never forget that all wasting of our gifts is a sin. Man is made for a noble purpose; his duties touch eternity, and are given for use in time. Shall we, for even a moment, dare assume that it is no concern of ours how we employ our powers? II. THE PRODIGAL'S DESPAIR. His situation is portrayed by the one graphic description of Christ: "There arose a mighty famine in that land." We are pointed to the darkest word in human history, precursor of the pestilence and death. It tells of the stony bed where the brook once ran. It tells of the fruitless trees, with branches prematurely stripped of their foliage. It tells of the grass of summer all burned away. His property was all wasted, and despair was settling down upon his soul. His life was a failure in such a land; his "riotous living" was beginning its curse. No want of the human heart, good or bad, is ever satisfied here. Even the disciple's anticipation is of a time when he shall awake in Christ's likeness. Just so, the nobler desires turned earthward are more insatiate still. Epicure was never satisfied. The sustenance of vicious desires only awakens new ones. The drunkard drinks deeper week by week, his thirst deepened with every draught of the mocking cup. The miser's lust burns fiercer as the gold in his chest becomes heavier. III. THE PRODIGAL'S RESOLUTION. We are told of an English soldier, wounded and faint, left by the retreating army to die. Helpless and motionless he lay, expecting his death, screened from the burning sun by an overhanging cliff. While his strength was ebbing fast there alighted just before his face a greedy, ravenous bird, waiting for the end to come. Thoughts of himself becoming the prey of that loathsome bird gave him a new energy, and he slowly arose and at last was saved. In almost a like helpless state the prodigal "came to himself." Two thoughts convinced him of his insane course—the abjectness of his misery, perishing with hunger; and the remembrance of the joys in the father's house. It was thus the dissolute John Newton became himself again. But for a like critical resolve John Bunyan would ever have remained the same worthless profligate as in his youth. A moral coward may face the cannon's mouth, but only a hero will turn from his sin. There is a splendour in such a moral conflict. Caesar's political fate depended upon his passing the Rubicon; and yet the same resolution is demanded in the case of every sinner. IV. THE PRODIGAL'S WELCOME. Words are powerless in declaring the richness of such a reception. The prodigal loved his father

because his father had first loved him. Day after day the hired servants had asked in vain, When will his love grow less? But it never ceased. (D. O. Mears.)

The prodigal son:—I. THE SPIRIT OF THE SON AT THE BEGINNING. His underlying aim is to look out for himself. He wanted his father's goods, but not his presence. This is the germ of sin—an independent, proud, unloving spirit toward God. II. THE DEPARTURE. Not many days after he found that he could be independent, he started off on his journey. He who does not pray and obey God, rapidly withdraws from Him. God is not in his thoughts, and therefore he soon ceases to appreciate the character which God loves. The true generosity, which is love to men for their good, is lost. He loves men for what they are worth to please himself. Reverence is lost. The courage of gentleness is lost. Abhorrence of wickedness is lost. He sees wit in the rejection of Divine authority, courage in anger, manliness in vice. III. THE LIFE OF UNHALLOWED PLEASURE. He chose the company that fitted his spirit. He sought others for what he could get out of them; they sought him for what they could get out of him. He had plenty of company as long as he had substance to waste on them. What he spent on them was wasted. What they gave him was wasted. The whole traffic was utter loss on both sides. They had not only outward possessions, but a wealth of intellect, affection, beauty, genius. They wasted it all. This the seeker for self and not God always does. He uses his talents to cover up his real aims and passions. Art has been made the handmaid of Sin. Music is called in to adorn the hideous nakedness of Vice. IV. THE COLLAPSE. The famine began when he had used up all he had. When all is gone, Nature herself turns against the prodigal. The world is a desert to a sinner who has run through the gifts of God, and he is absolutely certain to run them through in a little while. Alas for him when his own treasures are squandered, and the famine smites the far country! His one friend he has cast off to win the admiration of the friends he had chosen; and they have cast him off as soon as his goods are gone. V. THE NEW BUSINESS. No extreme of degradation could be greater than this to the mind of the Jew. He became the servant of a foreigner, whom the Jew despised. He tended swine, which were hateful to the Jew. He was hungry for the food which the swine fed on, and couldn't get it. Yet even this degradation was his own choice. VI. THE AWAKENING. "He came to himself." Awakening to his wretchedness, he remembers one friend. Oh, if God were not a friend, the prodigal would sink into despair and hell when he comes to himself. He sees now where he is, that he has brought himself into this poverty. Many call God cruel after they have wasted the abundance of gifts from him. They have received all they ask for, have made no acknowledgment, have wasted all, and then, finding themselves wretched, they say that God has done it. But not so this prodigal. He said, "I have sinned." VII. THE RESOLVE. He is awakened to a hope of pardon and gracious reception. But this does not hinder the full confession of his sin. He accepts the deepest humiliation. He seeks now not to maintain his pride, but to confess the truth. VIII. THE RETURN. He acted at once. Honest repentance always does. Resolves postponed are lies. Men befool themselves with them. He did not wait to cleanse himself and get a more becoming dress. He was not earning enough to keep himself alive, far less could he save enough to better his appearance. Besides, there was nothing in the far country which money could buy that would make him in the least degree presentable at home. The gay and costly attire which he wore when he was spending his living with harlots was as repulsive to his father as his rags. He was not to become better in order that he might go to his father, but he was to go to his father in order that he might be made better. Yet he went back, not to claim anything. His father had given him once all he had asked for, and he had taken it as if it had belonged to him, had wasted it, and ruined himself by it. He went back to make confession. IX. THE MEETING. He was yet a great way off when the father saw him. Love is quicker than youth, loftier than pride, mightier than Satan. The love of God is compassion. It suffers with the penitent. It would even spare the recital of the sad history. (A. E. Dunning.)

The prodigal son:—Six touching scenes. I. A SINFUL LIFE. 1. A young man chafing under the restraints of home. This chafing arose—(1) From a false view of true liberty. (2) From a false view of true happiness. (3) From a false view of self-guidance. 2. A young man demanding his portion of the inheritance. This demand arose—(1) From a desire to be independent of his father. (2) From a desire to lay out his life and means according to his own plan. 3. The young man receiving "the portion which befell him." (1) The father recognized his son's free agency. (2) The father saw that his son's heart was already estranged from him.

(3) The father felt that the bitter experiences of life alone, if anything, would undeceive his self-deluded and wilful son. II. THE DEPARTURE FROM HOME. 1. The departure was not long delayed. 2. The young man took all he could claim. III. HIS MODE OF LIFE WHEN ONCE RELEASED FROM THE RESTRAINTS OF HOME. 1. His life riotous. 2. His substance wasted. IV. THE RESULT OF HIS SELF-ELECTED LIFE. 1. Famine. 2. Want. 3. Degrading service. 4. Hunger. V. THE REACTION. 1. Situation realized. 2. Reflection commenced. 3. Decision resolved on. 4. A plea constructed. 5. Decision executed. VI. THE FATHER'S LOVE. 1. Love's long range of vision. 2. Love's tenderness. 3. Love's generosity. 4. Love's joy. Lessons: 1. The infinite contrast—man's selfishness and God's love. 2. The infinite folly—man breaking away from God. 3. The infinite grace—God embracing, forgiving, and honouring the returning prodigal. (D. C. Hughes, M.A.) *The prodigal son*:—I. THE PRODIGAL'S SIN. 1. Discontent. 2. Departure. 3. Wilful waste. II. HIS DESTITUTION. 1. Extreme poverty. 2. Deep degradation. 3. Woful want. III. HIS REPENTANCE. 1. Awakening. 2. Penitence. 3. Resolution. IV. HIS RESTORATION. 1. Return. 2. Confession. 3. Welcome. Applications: 1. Too many imitate the prodigal in his sin, but not in his repentance. 2. The Father is ever ready to meet and receive, with a kiss of affection, the returning prodigal. 3. God is exalted to have mercy. There is grace for the chief of sinners. Whosoever will, may return. Come home, prodigal! (L. O. Thompson.) *The prodigal*:—I. WILFUL. II. WANDERING. III. WASTEFUL. IV. WANTING. V. WRETCHED. VI. WALKING HOME AGAIN. VII. WELCOME. (J. Sanderson, D.D.) *The prodigal's wandering, return, and reception*:—I. A SINNER'S AVERSION AND ALIENATION FROM GOD. 1. A sinful state is a state of departure from God. 2. An extravagant or spendthrift. 3. A wretched or destitute state. 4. A servile and slavish state. 5. A state of perpetual dissatisfaction. 6. A state of deadness or death. II. THE SINNER'S RETURN TO GOD, AND THE MANNER THEREOF. The first demonstration of his return is—1. Consideration of his father's kindness. 2. By comparison, he saw his misery. 3. The view he got of the superiority of his father's house. 4. Determination. 5. Confession. 6. Self-condemnation. 7. Humble submission. 8. Filial confidence. 9. His obedience. III. THE SINNER'S APPREHENSIVE RECEPTION. 1. The father's affection to his returning child. 2. Eyes of mercy: he saw him as from a mountain. 3. Bowels of mercy: he feels compassion. 4. Feet of mercy: "he ran," while his son "came" only. 5. Arms of mercy: "he fell on his neck." 6. Lips of mercy: "he kissed him." The provision presented. 1. He came in rags. "He put the best robe upon him, a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet" (see also Isa. lxi. 10). 2. He came hungry. "Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry" (see also John vi. 54). 3. Great joy. "Let us be merry" (see Luke xv. 10); "Let them also that love Thy name, be joyful in Thee (Psa. v. 11). 4. The conduct of the elder brother (25-30) serves as a reproof to the Pharisees, who were displeased at the conversion of the Gentiles. (T. B. Baker.) *Parable of the prodigal son*:—I. Sinners regard God no farther than to gain from Him whatever they can. II. Sinners waste the blessings which they receive from His hands, and reduce themselves to absolute want. III. Afflictions are very often the first means of bringing them to a sense of their condition. IV. When they first acquire this sense they usually betake themselves to false measures for relief. V. This situation of a sinner is eminently unhappy. VI. The repentance of the gospel is the resumption of a right mind. Among the things which the sinner realizes, when he first comes to himself, are the following. 1. His own miserable condition. 2. That in the house of his heavenly Father there is an abundance of good. 3. A hope that this good may be his. I shall now proceed in the consideration of the progress of a sinner towards his final acceptance with God as it is exhibited in the text. With this design, I observe—I. True repentance is a voluntary exercise of the mind. II. True repentance is a filial temper, disposing us to regard God as our parent, and ourselves as His children. III. True repentance is followed, of course, by a confession of sin. IV. A real penitent feels that all his sins are committed against God. V. A real penitent is, of course, humble. VI. A real penitent brings nothing to God, but his want, shame, and sorrow. VII. A true penitent executes his resolutions of obedience. VIII. God is entirely disposed to receive the sincere penitent. IX. The richest provision is made for the enjoyment of the sincere penitent. X. There is a peculiar joy in heaven over the repentance of returning sinners. (T. Dwight, D.D.) *Bitterness of prodigal sin*:—I. THE PRODIGAL'S SIN. Dissatisfaction. Alienation. Estrangement. II. THE PRODIGAL'S MISERY. Sooner or

later every sinner must be taught that to be estranged from God is to be estranged from happiness. III. THE PRODIGAL'S REPENTANCE AND RETURN. 1. Sanity returns.

2. Comparison of the present with the past. 3. Resolution to return. His condition has conquered his pride. 4. Confession. 5. Action. IV. THE RETURNING PRODIGAL'S RECEPTION. 1. The Father's advance. 2. Acknowledgment of sin and unworthiness. 3. Honour and dignity. 4. Festivity and rejoicing. (*J. R. Thomson, M.A.*)

Sin and its consequences.—I. THE PRODIGAL'S SIN. 1. Alienation of affection. There was the root of his rebellion. His heart had wandered from its early tenderness, and had become warped, by yielding to a sinful lust of freedom, from its filial love. From this alienated heart, in natural sequence, flowed his after disobedience and sin. With the heart thus alienated, you can the more readily explain the prodigal's impatience of restraint, hankering after present licence of enjoyment, and departure from the house of his father. All these followed as the natural consequences of estranged affection. A yoke that is felt must always be galling; an enforced servitude stirs up within the man all latent feelings of rebellion. Hence, when the principle of filial love was gone, the restraint of the home became irksome, the desire for independence grew into a passion, and then followed the project of the journey into a far country, and of the uncontrolled rioting in the portion of goods. II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN. It were to defeat our own purpose to affirm that there are no pleasures in sin. The world would never continue in its ways if it reaped no gratification. There is, doubtless, something congenial to the wayward heart in the objects of its fond pursuit, and there is often thrown a blinding charm about the man, beneath whose spell unholy he fancies every Hecate a Ganymede, and dallies with deformity which he mistakes for beauty; but our point is this, that in every course of transgression, in every departure of the human spirit from God, there is debasement in the process, and there is ruin in the inevitable end. 1. Homelessness. 2. Waste and degradation. 3. Abandonment and famine. (*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*)

The prodigal son.—1. The fact that we are sinners is no reason why we should stay away from our God. 2. We do not require to work some good thing in us before God can love us. The sinner may come to God just as he is, through Jesus Christ. The parable firsts represents man in his departure from God. The son was at home, surrounded with all the comforts of home, and secure in the affection of his father; but he became dissatisfied, and wished to depart and be independent. How like to man's conduct towards his God! There have been vast efforts of learning and of metaphysical skill put forth to account for the origin of evil, but we will find nowhere a better explanation than that furnished by God Himself: "God made man upright, but he hath sought out many inventions." When the prodigal had apostatized in heart from his father, he then went and demanded his portion of goods. He is going to set up for himself, and demands his rights. As has been observed, his demand sounds as if he had been consulting his lawyer, and was particularly anxious to put his claim into strictly legal phraseology. The father made no opposition, but let him have his portion of goods. He saw that his heart was gone, and why should he retain his body? God has given to us a portion of goods. It is those things which men possess in common, irrespective of their character. When, however, man takes these gifts and seeks to employ them independent of God, and even against God, he plunges into fearful guilt and misery. What is meant by the prodigal son going into a far country? It is doubtless intended to represent the spiritual distance of the soul from God while in a state of unbelief. Our consciousness of sin makes us dread to think of God, and that dread ripens into absolute enmity—"The carnal mind is enmity against God." When in this state of mind men put all thought of God as far away from them as they can. As you have seen a man bow a disagreeable visitor out of his house, so men put God far from them, saying, "Depart from us, we desire not a knowledge of Thy ways." Oh! into what a far country has the sinner wandered when he has reached this state! And the longer he continues in it the wider becomes the distance between him and God, till at last he drifts into the dark sea of eternal death. When the prodigal got into the far country we are told that he began to be in want. This was a sad termination to his high prospects of enjoyment. Doubtless he thought that if he could only be once independent, and get away from all parental control, his wants would all be supplied. But now his trouble is only beginning. He has reached the far-off land of hope and promise, where all his desires were to be gratified, but he finds instead that there is a "mighty famine in that land." Thus end all men's attempts to be happy away from God. And the sooner we become convinced of this the better, that we may

no longer fill our souls with disappointment and grief, by seeking happiness where it cannot possibly be found; for except those who have found peace in Christ, the whole race in the scramble after the world may be classed under two heads—those who have been disappointed with the world, and those who are going to be. In this state of famine and distress the prodigal “joined himself to a citizen of the country.” We would have supposed that his sufferings, his bitter disappointments, his pinching wants, would have sent him home at once. But no—man’s last resource is to go to God. When he fails in one worldly project, he turns to another; and as each new plan fails to give him the satisfaction he expected, he concludes that the reason is that he has not yet got enough of the world, and so with new vigour he takes a fresh start. Man thinks that his happiness is to be found *without*, when it is only to be found *within*. There can no more be happiness in a foul heart, than there can be ease and comfort in a diseased body. This last change of the prodigal, accordingly, did not mend his condition at all; on the contrary, it sank him into a deeper degradation. At last the prodigal begins to think. “He came to himself.” Before this he had been acting like one whose wild imagination has broken the bridle of reason, and dashes furiously on to destruction. It was such a display of headlong passion as reminds one of “moody madness laughing wild and severer woe.” The expressions “self-possessed,” “beside one’s self,” “losing one’s self,” are all very common and significant, and shadow forth the great truth that man’s nature, made by God harmonious and united, has been rent in two. His soul has become a battle-field where two eternities conflict. Conscience pulls one way—passion another. The symptom of man coming to his right mind is when he begins to reflect. “In my father’s house there is bread enough and to spare.” He thought of one heart that once loved him tenderly, of a loving home that once sheltered him, and as he reflected upon the past and contrasted it with the present, his soul broke down in contrition, and then came the resolve, “I will arise and go to my father.” A great point is gained when the sinner is led to think of eternal things. Whatever it may be that leads to this, whether it be under the faithful preaching of the word or the afflictions of Providence, if he is only led to reflect upon his lost condition it will surely do him good. No man can honestly and earnestly take up the claims of God upon him and his prospects for eternity, and look them fairly in the face, without being led to feel his need of a Saviour. Sinners rush down to destruction because they will not consider. The prodigal had now come to the resolution of going to his father, but his mind was full of dark misconceptions about that father’s character and his feelings towards him. He knew that his father *once* loved him; but that he loved him now, that he had loved him all along in his wicked wanderings, was something of which he could form no conception. He knew that he had wasted his all, and that he had therefore no price to bring in his hand with which to purchase his father’s love; but still he felt as if something must be done to turn away the anger which he thought burned in his father’s bosom against him. How hard it is to lead the sinner to think of the gospel as God’s free, full welcome to him to come just as he is and be saved! Oh how little did the prodigal know of the depth of that love he had so long despised and grieved! In the meantime the father sees his long-lost son, while he is yet afar off. The eye of affection is quick to detect its object under any and every disguise, and love is quick in its motions. He runs to meet the long-lost one. Oh, how different is this from what he expected! How all his unbelieving doubts and his misconceptions of his father’s true character are dispelled by the gracious reception he now receives! and how vile his former conduct now appears in the light of his father’s love! The very love that gives him such a hearty reception at the same time produces true repentance on account of the past, and plants in his soul the principle of a true obedience in the future. Sinner, this is a picture of the God with whom you have to do. He has followed you in your wanderings with ten thousand proofs of His love, though you have not heeded them. And even now He loves you still. (J. R. Boyd.) *A moving story*:—When in England, on one occasion, I heard of a city missionary in London who always was in the habit of reading this scriptural story, if at any time he gained access to the roughs of the metropolis—“A certain man had two sons!” By this interesting exordium their attention was immediately aroused. On one occasion he was interrupted by the running remarks of an impulsive youth, one of the reckless London thieves, who had evidently never heard the story before. When he read the younger son’s request “for the portion of goods that fell to him,” his astonished hearer interpolated, “Cool that—rather cool!” When he came to the story of his

subsequent degradation and want, "Served him right," was the ejaculation. But when he heard the account of the prodigal's reception by his father, the impressed and delighted listener exclaimed, as the tears rolled down his cheeks, "Oh, what a good old cove!"—and even before the missionary had time to explain the parable, that "chief of sinners" seemed to have applied it in his own mind to the forgiving mercy of God. At the close of the service he waited on the missionary, and preferred to him this strange request: "Will you come and read that ere account o' the kind old cove to some fellows I know, that would get summat o' good from it like me?" When the missionary expressed his readiness to go, the only stipulation added was, that "he would bring no bobbies (policemen), for the bobbies knew them all." Down in a den in the depths of London that missionary read that parable; and of a truth its Divine Author smiled upon him as he did so, for he recognized that, as of old, "publicans and sinners" had drawn near "to hear him." When Dr. Chalmers first preached the annual missionary sermon in Surrey Chapel, London, Rowland Hill sat in the front of the gallery, all anxiety and expectation; for it was he who had spread his fame in the metropolis, and had persuaded the immense array of ministers to come together to hear the celebrated North-man. Similar was the relation which subsisted between the thief and the missionary in this instance, although otherwise the circumstances were very different. "This is the gemman wot has come to read us the story of the bad lad and the kind old cove wot I were telling ye off. It's a regular stunner. Jim, assume the perpendicular, and give the gemman the seat" (for there was only one chair, or rather stool, in the dreary apartment). Thus introduced and recommended, the missionary began: "A certain man had two sons," &c. As the narrative proceeded, verse by verse, he who had raised the expectations of the company so high, kept exclaiming, "Did ye ever hear the like o' that? Bill, wasn't I right? Isn't it a regular stunner?" But when the reader reached the account of the embrace and the kiss, the marks of approbation from all the auditors, to whom also it was quite new, were so loud that he was compelled to stop. "But wait till ye hear what the old fellow did for him!" was the last whetting exclamation of his patron. And when they heard of the robe and the ring, and the rejoicing, they all rejoiced together; for they seemed by a kind of Pentecostal intuition to conclude that even so would the God of the Bible treat them. (*F. Ferguson, D.D.*) *The Fatherland*:—Of all God's cords the finest, and perhaps the strongest, is the cord of love. Quitting his native chimney, among the canals and grassy fields of Holland, the stork pursues the retiring summer, and soon overtakes it in Nubia or Morocco. There, quite unconscious of the fester beneath his wing, he revels on the snakes of Taurus or the frogs of Nile: till at last, on a brilliant May morning, there is a sharp tug, and then a long steady pull, and high overhead float the broad pinions, and presently in the streets of Haarlem the boys look up, and shout their welcome, as, with eager haste and noisy outcry, an old acquaintance drops down upon the gable, and, drawn back to the old anchorage by a hawser of a thousand miles, the feathery sails are once more furled. Like instant over a generation's interval brings back the exile to his Highland glen. It matters not that in the soft Bermudas life is luxury; it is of no avail that in this Canadian clearing a rosy household has sprung up and in proud affection clings around him; towards the haunts of his childhood there is a strange deep-hidden yearning, which often sends absent looks towards northern stars, and ends at last in the actual pilgrimage. And although by the time of his return he finds that no money can buy back the ancestral abode; although, as he crosses the familiar hill and opens the sunny strath, strange solitude meets him; although when he comes up, the hamlet is roofless and silent, and the bonny beild, the nest of his boyhood, a ruin; although behind the cold hearth rank nettles wave, and from the cairn covering the spot where in the mornings of another world he waked up so cosily, young weasels peep forth; although the plane is cut down, or the bourtree, under whose sabbatic shadow his father used at eventide to meditate; although where the vision dissolves a pang must remain, there is no need that he should go back, bleak and embittered, as to a disenchanting world. This glut of reality was wanted to quench a long fever: but even here, if his own heart is true, he will find that God's cord is not broken. Cottages dissolve and family circles scatter, but piety and love cannot perish. The cord is not broken; it is only the mooring-post which a friendly hand has moved farther inland, and fixed sure and steadfast within the veil; and as the strain which used to pull along the level is now drawing upward, the home which memory used to picture in the Highlands, faith learns to seek in heaven. The true home of humanity is God—God trusted, communed with, beloved, obeyed; and,

"Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,"

do we come "from God, who is our home," but "trailing clouds of glory with us." Alloyed and interrupted by much that is base and wicked, there are in human nature still touches of tenderness, gleams of good feeling, noble impulses, momentary visitations of a natural piety, brought away from that better time and its blest abode, and which may be regarded as electric thrills along the line which connects with its Creator a fallen but redeemed humanity: as so many gentle checks of that golden chain which will one day bring back God's banished, and see the world "all righteous." The head of the great household is God, and the earthly home He has constituted so as to be an image of His own paternity. That home is founded in love, and in administering it love is called forth every day—often a pitying, forbearing, forgiving love—a love sometimes severe and frowning, often self-denying, it may chance self-sacrificing. As the world now is—a ruin, with a remedial scheme in the midst of it—that home is the nearest image of the Church, and should be the most efficient fellow-worker with it. "In the family the first man himself would receive lessons on self-government such as even the garden of Eden did not supply, and perpetual occasion for its exercise. In what a variety of ways would he learn to repeat to his children the substance of the Divine prohibition to himself—'Thou shalt not eat of it.' How soon would he who had had Paradise for a home discover that if he would convert home into a paradise he must guard his offspring at this point, subordinating their lower propensities to their superior powers." If presided over by those who themselves fear God—and otherwise no house is a home—there will be something sacred in its atmosphere, and alike enforced by affection and authority the lessons of heavenly wisdom will sink deep; and with a sufficient probation superadded to a careful protection, it is to be hoped that, before transplantation into the world's rough weather, good dispositions may have been so far confirmed as only to strengthen by further trial. In order to make your home the preparation for heaven, the first thing is to strengthen that cord of love by which you ought to hold your child, even as our heavenly Father holds His children. That love is yours already—an up-leaping, uplooking affection, if you do not destroy its tenderness by perpetual rebuffs, if you do not forfeit reverence by being yourself unworthy of it. "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath"; be not always scolding, reproving, punishing; "but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Take advantage of their affection for yourself, and use it as the appointed medium for drawing them into the love of God. Train up the child in the way he should go. If he is not to go in the way of low pastime and coarse indulgence, point him to higher joys; open to him the well-spring of knowledge; try to ascertain and develop a turn for some ennobling pursuit, or create a taste for the treasures bequeathed by genius. After all, however, there is another influence which goes farther in creating the home. It is mother-love which endears the fatherland, and it is to the cradle that the fairy-line is fastened which even in the far country holds so mysteriously the heart of the wanderer. When Napoleon, with his army of invasion, lay at Boulogne, an English sailor who had been captured tried to escape in a little raft or skiff which he had patched together with bits of wood and the bark of trees. Hearing of his attempt, the First Consul ordered him to be brought into his presence, and asked if he really meant to cross the channel in such a crazy contrivance. "Yes, and if you will let me, I am still willing to try." "You must have a sweetheart whom you are so anxious to revisit." "No," said the young man, "I only wish to see my mother, who is old and infirm." "And you shall see her," was the reply, "and take to her this money from me; for she must be a good mother who has such an affectionate son." And orders were given to send the sailor with a flag of truce on board the first British cruiser which came near enough. Napoleon was always eager to declare his own obligations to his high-spirited and courageous mother, the beautiful Letizia Ramolini; but the difficulty would be to find any man of mark who has not made the same avowal. (*James Hamilton, D.D.*) Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.—*Impiety urging unjust demands*:—Here was—1. A disregard of most sacred obligations. This young man was bound by the most sacred obligations to manifest ever a spirit of gratitude to his father—ever practically show that he recognized the immense obligation under which he was laid by the never-ending kindnesses of that father. But instead thereof, we find rebellion against home restraints, and discontent with a father's rule and with home

blessings. He resolved to leave the weary monotony of home for the variety and pleasure of distant scenes; and not caring for the injustice of the demand, he would plead for his portion of the family estate. He would be his own master; he would be free and unfettered; he would wander away as he pleased, and do whatever he listed; and gathering up his ingratitude, his selfishness, and his rebellion in one act of shameless courage, he said to his father, "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." Ask yourselves whether you do not act thus with God. Is it a fact that you are happy in the smiles of God, or is it true that you try to shun Him and His laws? Is it a fact that you have placed yourself in His hands, and are trusting to His Fatherly love to guide you aright; or, is it true that you place no sincere dependence in God to guide you, but are trusting to yourself—your own energy and wisdom—for all you want? By these simple rules you may easily know your state; and I pray you, as you value your soul's interest, know the truth at once. Here was—2. A wrong standard of manhood. He imagined that whilst at home he was in leading strings, was a child, and would never be a man. To be a man, he thought he must break loose from the trammels of home, and walk out freed from all restraint. To be a man, he thought he must be his own master, and be responsible to no one. To be a man, he thought he must command his time and his purse, and satisfy the inquisitiveness of none. We know he was a fool, and knew nothing rightly: that he would have been a thousand times more of a man if he had ordered his life by a just and righteous law, if he had respected Divine and social obligations, and if he had paid deference to the wisdom and experience of those who knew the world and would have given him sound and wholesome advice. Licence is not liberty. Rioting is not happiness. Extravagance, carelessness, and sensuality are not manliness. To be a man, you must be a gentleman; and every true gentleman pays respect to law; to the laws of social life as well as to the laws of the State; to the laws of God as well as to the laws of man. Here was—3. A manifestation of the most intense selfishness. He well knew the grief and pain which he caused his father. He knew also the difference it would make to home comforts if he took away a share of the family estate. But he cared not for that. He would do as he pleased, regardless of all others' claims and feelings. Selfishness is the most unfeeling passion in the human breast. This is just the spirit of the world. Its unceasing cry is, "Give me." No matter what it costs; no matter what hearts break; no matter what misery is caused; no matter who lacks—"Give me." In the temple of Mammon from every shrine there ascends the ceaseless litany, not "Grant me in mercy Thy favours," but "Give me my claims." From every unhumiliated heart there ascends the constant petition, sharpened in the intensity of its appeal by the very benevolence of God's character, "Give me." (*W. G. Pascoe.*) *The younger son and his demand:*—The young man brought before us in this story is just the sort of person whom the world would describe as a thoroughly sensible fellow. I feel sure that such a man in our own day would be thus described by his companions. He showed his sense just in the way in which men of the world show theirs now. Let us regard him for a few moments from this point of view. The first thing that this sensible man does is to feel dissatisfied within himself at the condition of dependence in which he is introduced to us. The father seems to have been in comfortable circumstances—perhaps in affluence. The young man has never been begrudged anything; all his wants have been supplied as fast as they have arisen. But then his position was one of dependence, and it was that that made things so far from agreeable. It was not his father's way to bestow his wealth upon his children, so that they might possess an independent property, but to supply their reasonable wants as fast as they occurred, and it was against this state of things that the young man's will began to rebel. "Why should not I be like other fellows? What a humiliating thing it is that I should be treated like a grown up child! If I had my own fortune to do what I liked with, I should very soon be able to show this father of mine what the use of money is, and how it should be spent." The father does not refuse: he will not keep his son in a state of compulsory dependence upon him. There and then "he divides unto them his living." Observe, he "divides his living" between both his sons. It does not say that he gave half to the younger son and kept the other half himself, but "he divided unto them his living." What became of the elder son's portion? Where did he invest it? How did he employ it? We find that long years afterwards his elder son says, "Thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." Ah! the elder brother had the wisdom to give back what was his. No sooner was his portion of goods

assigned to him than he put it back again in safe keeping. I can fancy him saying to his father, "I do not want my portion, I am quite happy, I have all I want." In a moment of discontent, at a later period, he allows himself to speak hardly of his father's treatment, but this eldest son understood his father on the whole, although for a moment he might be unfaithful to the consciousness of the benefits of his position: and so he had the wisdom to give back what his father had given to him. But the younger son was a far more sensible fellow than that. So soon as he gets his money, he makes up his mind to spend it according to his own heart's desire. So the second thing this particularly sensible young man does is to make up his mind that the restraints of home are positively intolerable. He cannot go on in this droning way any longer; he must see something of the world; life is hardly worth having under such conditions; he must break away from the restraints of the paternal roof, turn his back upon old associations, and go forth and enjoy himself: he has had enough of this hum-drum, tedious life; so, like a very sensible young man, he leaves his father's home, and goes forth into a distant land. I can fancy it cost him something at the moment. Nobody ever goes to hell without meeting with difficulties in the way. As he looked into his father's face and saw the tear rising in the old man's eye—as he took a long last look at the dear old home where he had spent so many happy and innocent years, I can fancy it cost him something. A better instinct would sometimes assert itself within his nature. "Have you not been happy? Those sunny hours of childhood, what could have been more pleasant? If you have been unhappy it has been your own fault. Your brother is a happy man; why should not you have been?" But the lower instinct prevailed; his downright good common-sense was stronger than anything else: so that this thoroughly sensible man makes up his mind to turn his back upon his father's house, and into a distant land he goes. Now what was the next step that this "sensible fellow" took? When he had asserted his independence and had got away from his father, and the restraints of home, he began to enjoy himself. Surely he showed his sense in that! How does he enjoy himself? He "wasted his substance in riotous living." That does not sound very sensible just at first; but there are plenty of young men who show their good sense by pursuing the same course. "Oh," you say, "we do not approve of fellows being spendthrifts:" yet you approve of men spending something that is far more precious than money. How have you been spending your time? What have you to show for it? How have you been spending your influence? Every one of you might have been using it for eternity, and already there might have been a crown of glory laid up as the result of well-used influence. What has become of it? How have you been spending your money? for we may as well speak of that too. Some of you have been scattering it to the winds; others hoarding it up in the bank; some, laying it out in business speculations, and the very gold which you might have so used as to "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" has become the curse of your life. How does it appear in God's sight? Wasted!—that substance of yours squandered, because it has never been turned to any really good purpose. What was the next thing that this "sensible" young man did? He formed a great many gay acquaintances. I do not think there is a young man in this congregation that lives for the world, but will agree that he was on the whole a "sensible man" in doing that. It is just what you do. How many a young man there is who is kept back from doing what he knows is right because he has formed so many acquaintances, and is surrounded by the influence of his companions. He would like to be different, but then he cannot shake off their influence; they keep him spell-bound. How sensible you are to let those friends of yours do the very worst that your worst enemy could desire to do for you! Do you think that is "sensible"? What was the next thing that this "sensible" young man did? When his pleasures had all failed him, when his roses had become thorns, then he began to be sober, and like many sober people, he began to look about for employment. He finds it rather difficult to obtain any employment that suits him, but employment he must have. Oh! how like many of our worldly prodigals! When they have spent their youth in following one wild excitement after another—in poor, empty, idle hilarity and futile mirth—when manhood comes on with all its grave cares, they begin to occupy their minds with business. The mighty famine has begun to assert itself; the man is beginning to find the emptiness of the pleasures which he has lived for; he can no longer enjoy them; the capacity of enjoyment is beginning to pass away from him; and now he plunges into business; he becomes a slave of daily routine, it may be; his mind

is taken up with a thousand occupations; he begins to work hard, and all to satisfy the moral hunger of his nature. He gives himself up to money-making, yet that does not satisfy, but he thinks it will. He flies to speculation: that excites, but does not satisfy—he hopes it will. He betakes himself to domestic occupation, the joys or the cares of family life, and he hopes to find satisfaction there, yet he does not. Is not the man a sensible being? The mighty famine becomes more and more insupportable, and the want becomes more and more appalling. Our young friend sits solitary in the field; cannot you see him? His clothes are torn into rags, his eyes are sunken in their sockets, his cheeks are hollow, his lips are parched and cracked; he looks like the very effigy of famine itself. The swine are feeding around him; he is gnawing at the very husks which the swine eat. "And no man gave unto him." What, no man? No man. Of all his former friends, of those who had stood by him so faithfully as long as he had money to spend and luxuries to offer, what! no man? Not that boon companion, not that friend who only a few weeks ago swore that he would stand by him through thick and thin? No man? Nay, the last crust has been devoured. There he sits famine-stricken, solitary, the preying of hunger in his body, far more the prey of remorse in his soul! There he sits. Poor "sensible" man! That is what his common-sense has brought him to. At this moment a change takes place. Holy Scripture describes it as a change from insanity to sanity. He ceases to be a lunatic, and he begins to be himself. "He came to himself." It passes from him like a horrible dream, that strange delirium of the life which he had been leading since he left his father's home, with all its transient circumstances, its fleeting joys, its gaudy decorations, the poor, empty bubbles that have broken in his grasp—it has all passed from him like a horrible dream. He starts, as from a night-mare. Cannot you see him as he springs from the ground, with a sudden light beaming upon his countenance, his face turned toward the home of his infancy? "What a fool I have been! My whole life has been one great mistake. From beginning to end, I have just been adding error to error as well as sin to sin. I have thrown away health, and affluence, and comfort, and respectability, and peace of mind, and innocency, and reputation, everything worth having—I have lost it all! And here I am, a wreck of a man; all real pleasure gone out of my life; stricken down by the fatal pestilence of sin, shrivelled up by the miserable famine which reigns within my nature. What a fool I am!" Oh, happy they who come to this conclusion before it is too late! (*W. M. Hay Aiken, M.A.*)

The younger and elder sons; or, differences of character in the same family:— Those who belong to the same family, and have enjoyed the same opportunities, often turn out very differently. One proves a comfort, another a grief, to his parents; for "a wise son maketh a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother." Grace runs not in families; for, in this respect, a house is often divided. God takes "one of a city, and two of a family, and brings them to Zion." Jacob and Esau were twin brothers; yet Jacob was a man of prayer, and, as a prince, had power with God and men, and prevailed; while Esau was a profane man, and sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Some children become even exceedingly profligate, while others are quite steady; and among those who are steady there is much diversity, some being merely decent and inoffensive, while others are eminently dutiful and kind. So, in the case supposed in this parable, the two sons are represented as being of very opposite habits. (*James Foote, M.A.*)

Eastern law of inheritance:— There are some who consider this demand so strange, and the father's compliance with it, abused as the compliance was likely to be, so much stranger still, that the supposition can only appear natural when there is taken into view the custom which prevailed in Eastern countries of children claiming their share of their father's property during his lifetime, which, it appears, they were legally entitled to do, and with which demand, of course, the father could not refuse to comply. The intention of this law was to protect children against harsh usage from their parents; but it was certainly very liable to abuse. The son might be unreasonable in his demand, "yet the demand must first be acceded to before the matter could be legally inquired into; and then, if it was found that the father was irreproachable in his character, and had given no just cause for the son to separate from him, in that case the civil magistrate fined the son." Others, however, are of opinion that, though the Mosaic law provided against improper partialities and dislikes on the part of a father when disposing of his property, there is not sufficient ground for affirming that it vested any such right in children during the life of their parents; and they therefore look on the

compliance of the father, here supposed, as an instance of singular generosity, which rendered the undutiful departure and conduct of his son peculiarly base. When the father assigned his portion to the younger son, he, at the same time, assigned his portion to the elder, who, according to the Jewish law, would receive a double portion. The words of the parable are, "He divided unto them his substance." In doing so he may be supposed to have reserved what was merely sufficient for himself. (*Ibid.*) *Give me my portion*:—"Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." The young man seems to say, "My youth is my own, and all that it brings within my reach. Why should you fetter me with restraints, or impose upon me an unfriendly yoke? It is enjoyment that makes life worth having, and self-gratification means enjoyment. Let me have my liberty, and do exactly what I please. Why have to weigh each particular action, and turn away from pleasures that attract me because they are supposed to be wrong? Religion means giving up everything I like, and submitting to things that I don't like; it means all that is tedious and irksome. I prefer to be my own. Give me my portion of goods—the sunny hours of youth; they are mine, and I will do with them as I please." "Give me my portion of goods," says that child of fashion. "Youth and beauty, and attractive manners, and wit and popularity, and the faculty of winning admiration and even affection—they are all alike mine, and I intend to get all I can out of them. Why shouldn't I? If I were to listen to the claims of religion, I should have to stop and think before I allowed myself to enjoy anything; and conscience might be troublesome, and I might be checked and worried by all sorts of straight-laced notions, and thus I might leave the flowers of life unplucked and the fruit of the garden ungathered. Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." And it is not only the young and the heedless that urge the request. Would that we grew wiser as we grow older! "Give me my portion," the man of the world seems to say. "Money, and all that it will buy—power and popularity, and success and social position, the excitements of commerce, the gratification of political or social ambition—these are my portion. If I were to become religious, who knows how my course of life might have to be changed and modified? Indeed, I might have to alter its whole aim and purpose, and impose upon myself all sorts of obligations which I pay no heed to now. My money is mine; why shouldn't I use it as I please? My time is mine; why should I not spend it as I like? My faculties and talents are my own; why should I not employ them for my own gratification?" "Give me my portion of goods," exclaims the woman of the world. "My children are my own, and I will train them up in the way wherein I wish they should go. I will, if I please, educate them in vanity, and train them to 'shine in society,' so that my motherly pride may be gratified. My house is my own; it shall be the home of luxury and the temple of domestic pleasure. I will order it as I will, but there shall be no place there for Him who was welcomed of old at Bethany. Jesus Christ might prove a troublesome guest, and dispute my supreme authority, if He once were welcomed there. It is my own home, and I will do with it as I please." Thus it is that men and women still claim their portion of goods. And God looks on, and sees them take His gifts without even the word of thanks which no doubt fell from the lips of the prodigal, and find in these His gifts a reason for turning their backs upon the Giver; and yet He does not interfere any more than this father did. Wilful man must have his own way, until at last, in bitter grief and anguish, either here or hereafter, he reaps the fruit of it, and finds that "there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." (*W. M. Hay Aiken, M.A.*) *God allows man to use his independence*:—It is surely worthy of notice that the father makes no sort of difficulty of compliance with his request. We do not even hear of a word of expostulation on his part. And this may teach us that when we elect to break away from our proper relations with God, and to assert our own independence, or fancied independence, of Him, we are free to do so. God does not constrain our will by the assertion of His superior power. If we are determined to turn our backs on Him, and break away from His control, we can do it, and He won't hinder us, however much it may cut Him to the heart that we should wish to adopt such a course. I see a look of sadness pass over that venerable face, but that is the only outward sign of the sorrow and disappointment that fill the father's heart. He calls both his sons into his presence, and there and then he divides his whole fortune between them, and the discontented boy finds himself possessed of all he desired, and of more than all that he had dared to hope for. At last he is his own master, and can take his own course, and do just as he pleases. His eyes glisten, his heart bounds;

but in the midst of his wild, hilarious excitement that sorrowful look on his father's face must ever and again, methinks, have risen on his memory. Do you think, after all, he was really happy? Was there not already a bitter drop in his cup? He had gained his fortune, but how much had it cost! (*Ibid.*) *The discontented son gets his wish*:—The father might have refused. It was a grave step, but he sees that it springs from no sudden impulse. He had marked with anxious looks the unmistakable dissatisfaction of his younger son. The warmth of that once loving heart has gradually died away into a spirit of cold, sullen, settled discontent. This had not escaped the father's eyes. Even the flimsy appearance of propriety, he foresees, must soon give way to some outbreak of avowed rebellion; so that now it is no use remonstrating—the time for that is gone by. Things are come to such a crisis that he has all but thrown off the yoke. "Well," thought he, "be it so, since it must be. Better let him have his own way; better to let him follow out his own plans. He little thinks what this step will lead him to. Experience, perhaps, may teach him, by some bitter fruits, the sin, and folly, and ingratitude of all this." "He divided to them his living." This is God's method with sinners. If they do not like to retain God in their knowledge, and set their heart upon their iniquities, bursting the bonds of conscience, and trampling on the warnings and precepts of His Word—if they have loved idols, and after idols they will go—be it so. God will not contend for ever. He gives them up to their own hearts' desire, and leaves them to be filled with their own devices. But it is a tremendous chastisement. It is the scourging with scorpions, and not with whips. Oh, better to hear any of those terrible threatenings that God thunders against sin and sinners, whereby, peradventure, they may be warned and turn. But no sentence is so terrible as that which silently leaves the sinner to himself. (*W. B. Mackenzie, M.A.*) *God does not deny foolish, inexperienced man his wish*:—The latter is a free agent, and must needs be treated as such. If he will have the management of his own affairs, why he must just have it. Doubtless there would be many unreported conversations between the father and the youth before he consented to give him his portion. He would often lay his hand affectionately on his son's shoulder and remonstrate with him. He would beseech him to remain at home and keep him company. Perhaps he would say, "Now that your mother is dead and gone, my heart doats upon you; for you resemble her much." But no; the selfish youth would have his own portion, and set up a separate establishment. In like manner, if men will set up and set off for themselves, the Lord does not absolutely deny them their wish, although He yields reluctantly and after long expostulation. And the Divine Spirit still mournfully hovers near, saying, "Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die?" (*F. Ferguson, D.D.*) *The divided living*:—"He divided unto them his living"—literally "his life." That is what the heavenly Father has done. He has given His darling—the apple of of His eye—His only begotten Son—His life. He has put Him down into the midst between the two classes of characters. The one thief rails, the other adores; the one son loves, the other rejects. But let us beware, for "this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel." The great question of the judgment day will be, "How did you treat My life, whom I gave you as your portion?" Yes, every man has a portion from God. The humblest artizan has a portion. The poorest factory-girl has a rich dowry. Jesus is her portion. Your birthright, my reader, is eternal life in Him. But see that you sell it not, like Esau, for a mess of pottage. See that the intoxicating cup, or the pleasures of the world, do not rob you of immortal bliss. (*Ibid.*) *Took his journey into a far country*.—*Departure from home*:—Momentous is the occurrence, if not always sad, of a young man first leaving home. He launches his barque on life's rough sea, and will he safely ride over the waters? will he avoid the quicksands of temptation? will he steer clear of the rocks of vicious indulgence? will he, guided by the heavenly Pilot, reach the port of heaven in safety? These are problems that the future alone will solve. Observe here—I. IMPIETY OBTAINING UNJUST DEMANDS. We are not aware that the father made any great opposition to those demands. Perhaps he had reasoned with him so many times before, with no success, that he had grown tired. Perhaps he plainly saw that his son's heart was gone from home, and he felt by no means anxious to retain a heartless boy. And with a heaving breast, though but few words, proceeded to divide unto each his living. The young man thus obtained his desire. 1. Man can generally get what he strives for. If a diligent, persevering, careful man sets his heart upon establishing a business, he can generally succeed. In such cases the prizes are far more

common than the blanks. More than that; if a man sets his heart in obtaining any particular object, that object can generally be had. Energy, whether in a bad or a good cause, will mostly be crowned with success. This is a terrible view to take of those who live only for the things of time. One of the most terrific sentences that ever dropped from the Saviour's lips illustrates this sentiment. Speaking of the Pharisees and their motives for fasting, praying, and giving alms: "Verily," He says, "I say unto you, they *have* their reward." Not "they *shall* have," but "they *have*." They do these things to be seen of men, and to have applause of men. That is the height of their ambition, and to that they attain.

2. A tremendous power this is in man. He can choose his own path, and walk in the way that he has marked out. Like the father of the prodigal, God will not hinder him from doing as he pleases. He did not in paradise; He left Adam free and unfettered in action. In like manner, when the Israelites cried out for flesh, and mourned for the flesh-pots of Egypt, God heard their cry, and brought them quails in abundance; but the object of their desire became the rod of their punishment. And God through all the ages has acted in like manner.

3. This power of choice in man will at once suggest his responsibility. Be assured that "Whatever a man soweth that shall he also reap." I have read of a man who, wandering along a rocky shore at ebb of the tide, saw a lobster under a rock, and thinking he could gain a prize for his supper, put in his hand to lay hold of its claw. Instead of laying hold of the lobster, the lobster laid hold of him, and he was shortly horrified at finding that what he meant to be his captive was his too sure captor. All the strength that he could exert could not draw away his hand from the lobster's pinch. Above him from rock and ledge hung shells and seaweed, sure signs that if he remained there long the waves, rising inch by inch, would sweep completely over his head. The waters began to rise; they reached his hand. In the agony of despair he summoned every particle of remaining strength to get the imprisoned limb free, but all in vain. Higher and yet higher rose the waves, and his last dying shriek was lost in the roar of a breaker that spent its fury on the rocks around him. You pity him, do you not? But what would you say if told that he had deliberately fastened himself to a rock at ebb of the tide, and then waited for the waves to wash his life away? If you pity the one, you would be horrified at the other. But it is only a too true representation of the man who lives without God.

II. IMPIETY BREAKING LOOSE FROM HOME RESTRAINTS. "And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country." When the Emperor Decimus desired to place the crown upon the head of Decius his son, the young prince refused in the most strenuous manner, saying, "I am afraid lest, being an emperor, I should forget that I am a son; I had rather be no emperor and a dutiful son than an emperor and such a son as hath forgotten his true obedience." What a contrast was that to the case of the prodigal! Not only did he demand his share of the goods, but he added insult to injury by refusing any longer to be bound by the ties of home. This was the natural result of his unnatural demand. As to locality, we cannot depart from God. He fills heaven and earth. Yet morally and spiritually man may forsake God. If God is banished from the thoughts, He is forsaken. You may be surrounded with the light of the sun, but although it is noonday, if you persist in closing your eyes, it is the same to you as though there were no sun. And if you persist in banishing God from your thoughts, it is the same to you as though there were no God. (*W. G. Pascoe.*)

The prodigal's departure:—There is a picture of Vernet's which brings out with extraordinary power his character of selfish unconcern for the feelings of his father. It represents the courtyard of an Eastern house, in which he is taking leave. The mother is leaning, in the depths of distress, against the side of the door, the father is bending towards him with a countenance full of yearning affection and grief, as if his heart would break; a leading domestic, perhaps "the steward of the house," clenches his hands as unable to restrain his feelings of indignation, astonishment, and shame at his cool indifference as he turns away from his father's embrace to a groom who is holding a high-mettled and richly-caparisoned steed, so that he may mount it at once and take his departure. Altogether it is a dreadful picture; but it may have been, and no doubt was, far below the reality of a multitude of such scenes, vividly present to the all-comprehending mind of the Divine Speaker. (*M. F. Sadler.*)

Moral declension:—These words have had infinite applications; every one, perhaps, who has heard them, has applied them in many different ways. No one need contradict the other; those who have learnt the meaning from their own experience have understood it best. How the sense of an eternal home, of a

father's house, is awake in childhood ; how it dies out as the youth begins to gather all together—to make a world for himself ; how he travels further and further from the remembrance of home ; how the Divine treasures of affection, hope, intellect, health, become dissipated ; how he loses himself in the intoxications of the senses ; here you have a story which is repeated again and again, and always finds mournful facts in us and in our fellows to illustrate and enforce it. And so the records of Gentile mythology and Gentile history explain themselves to us. We see what the cause of moral declension in the nations of the old world was ; how the feeling of the invisible lost itself in visible worship ; how the sense of unity broke into a number of objects of terror or of beauty ; how the fear of a destroyer struggled with the hope of a deliverer ; how the first overpowered the second ; how the belief in justice contended with the dread of a Power which could overpower justice ; how the lusts of the man darkened the images of the gods whom he adored ; how he sought, by vile expedients, to avert the wrath before which he trembled ; how superstitions grew to be more fearful ; how moral corruptions always gained strength along with them ; how protests against both mixed with an unbelief in those truths which the superstitions counterfeited, in the righteousness which the corruptions defied. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*) *An ignoble departure* :—In old days the young knight rode forth to do justice and redress wrong—and that was a noble and a hopeful starting. But this young prodigal's riding forth—it was all meanness and sadness and misery. Look for nothing brave or manly there. From innocence to sin, from sin to sorrow—there was no beauty in that path. To be the slave of Satan, to follow the whisper of temptation in the black and dark night—there was nothing but abomination in that errand. A bird hasting to the snare, an ox led to destruction, are the fit emblems of that pilgrimage. The roads are different, but all deadly ; one leads to madness, one to suicide, one to sudden destruction, one to open shame ; but they all sweep through the valley of the shadow, they all end in the chambers of death and hell. (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *Leaving home* :—Seldom it may be hoped, does a youth leave home simply because he has tired of it ; still more rarely, we trust, because he wishes to lead a life of mere self-indulgence. More frequently it is on an honourable errand that the youthful pilgrim sets forth. A subsistence must be earned, an education must be obtained, a profession has been chosen, a Divine call is obeyed ; and so the student goes to college, the recruit seeks his regiment, the sailor joins his ship, the aspirant after an honourable independence starts for the city or the distant colony ; and there is on both sides true tenderness—on the one side the best intention, on the other many an earnest prayer. For character there is a twofold security—the first commandment and the fifth—love to God and hallowed domestic affections : nor is that character likely to drift where both anchors are out, and where the heart is well moored both to the home on earth and the home on high. If you wish to have a happy and honourable career, you must choose the best companions. Your fellow-clerks, your neighbours in the shop or factory, you cannot choose : they are chosen for you ; but it is left in your own option to select your friends ; and you may find it a great difficulty. If you were a dry, disagreeable fellow, people would let you alone ; but if you are worth cultivating ; if instead of being a proser or a pedant, you have pleasant dispositions and a frank, popular way, instead of being a silent, solemn automaton, or the next thing to it, a man of one idea—a wooden centaur who has grown into the same substance with his hobby ; if you have a rich and varied nature ; if you have humour ; if you are musical ; if you are fond of athletic sports ; if you read ; if you row—every separate liking is just a several hook, a distinct affinity to which a kindred spirit will be apt to attach itself, and ere ever you are aware you may find yourself complicated with an acquaintanceship which, although at some point or other agreeable, is on the whole cumbrous or uncongenial. It is pleasant to feel that you are liked, and it is painful to keep at arm's length those who take to you and would evidently value your society. Nor would it be fair to call them by hard names. They are not seducers or systematic assassins, lying in wait for the precious soul ; and the harm they do is not so much from having any evil purpose as from their having no right principle. Nevertheless, if a man carrying contagion proposes a visit or offers you his arm, although he intends no injury, you stand aloof, and you are not to be denounced as a churl for declining a danger which he does not realize. Two are better than one, and you will find it both protection and incentive if you can secure a faithful friend ; and in some respects better than two are the many ; therefore you cannot do more wisely than seek out in the Young Men's Society a wider companionship ; and whilst instructed by the

information of some, and strengthened by the firmer faith or larger experience of others, there are important themes on which you will learn to think with precision, and in the exercise of public speaking you will either acquire a useful talent or will turn it to good account. You are a young man away from home. We have said, choose good companions; we must add, beware of bad habits. It is of vast moment to be "just right" when starting. At Preston, at Malines, at many such places, the lines go gently asunder; so fine is the angle that at first the paths are almost parallel, and it seems of small moment which you select. But a little farther on one of them turns a corner or dives into a tunnel, and now that the speed is full the angle opens up, and at the rate of a mile a minute the divided convoy flies asunder: one passenger is on the way to Italy, another to the swamps of Holland; one will step out in London, the other in the Irish Channel. It is not enough that you book for the better country: you must keep the way, and a small deviation may send you entirely wrong. A slight deflection from honesty, a slight divergence from perfect truthfulness, from perfect sobriety, may throw you on a wrong track altogether, and make a failure of that life which should have proved a comfort to your family, a credit to your country, a blessing to mankind. Beware of the bad habit. It makes its first appearance as a tiny fay, and is so innocent, so playful, so minute, that none save a precisian would denounce it, and it seems hardly worth while to whisk it away. The trick is a good joke, the lie is white, the glass is harmless, the theft is only a few apples from a farmer's orchard, the bet is only sixpence, the debt is only half-a-crown. But the tiny fay is capable of becoming a tremendous giant; and if you connive and harbour him, he will nourish himself at your expense, and then, springing on you as an armed man, will drag you down to destruction. (*James Hamilton, D.D.*) *Life abroad*:—I. It was a LIFE OF UNBOUNDED LICENCE. My text says, "He spent his substance in riotous living." His elder brother unveils some of that rioting by telling his father that he had "devoured his living with harlots." What a picture! He had been trained by godly parents. How soon did he forget the guides of his youth! Not all at once, however, did he fall from a pure-minded youth to a degraded debauchee. One principle, smitten by the hand of pleasure, fell, then another, and at last there was nothing in common between him and his pious father. Let us look in upon this young man in the midst of his rioting. He has been for some time now in the far country, and has tolerably well established himself as a dissolute liver. See him in one of his midnight orgies. A numerous company is present. The profane and the sceptical, the abandoned and the unfortunate are there. But where is the prodigal? Surely that is not he at the end of the room, with bloated face, and cold, grey, glassy, loveless eye; with person unclean, and garments barely fastened; with one arm resting on the shoulders of a dissolute companion, and with the other lifting high the goblet in which the wine is red and sparkling; who, with the frequent faltering of a drunken hiccup, now swears bitter oaths, and now sings a lascivious song. Can this be he? II. IT ENDED IN ABJECT MISERY AND WANT. "And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want." His fortune, enough for ordinary demands, was soon run through at the rate he lived, and at last, in the midst of famine, he came to absolute need. He had spent all; and as he had never cultivated any branch of industry, and his life of vicious indulgence had most likely incapacitated him for labour, he was reduced to dire extremities. "He began to be in want." Lord Chesterfield, than whom no nobleman has been more celebrated for "all the elegancies of a courtly, and all the accomplishments of a social, life, said, "I am now at the age of sixty years; I have been as wicked as Solomon; I have not been so wise; but this I know, I am wise enough to test the truth of his reflection, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit." He began to be in want! The reason of this felt want, both in the prodigal's and in every sinner's heart, is simply that man has a soul! You might as well try to feed your body on ashes as satisfy your soul with sinful indulgences. Reduced to such dire extremity he sought help. "He went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine." He who once scorned to be his father's son now became a stranger's slave. He had sought liberty and found a prison. Servants waited on him at home; he was the lowest of all servants abroad. Trapp truly says, "Ruin follows riot at the heels." And now he comes to his lowest state. "And no man gave unto him." We can hardly suppose that all his former companions were unaware of his sad condition; but not one of them will lend him a helping hand, or give him a morsel of bread. There is not one of the whole number that will render him assistance,

or even afford him recognition. "Know him, did you say? Oh dear no, we do not know him. Know that swineherd? Oh, no; the society in which we move we hope is different from that. Know that man in rags, did you say? Do you mean to insult us by insinuating that our companions are ragged? See that wretched starveling before? Certainly not; we know nothing of him or of his history!" If he is sick, they will not visit him. If he is dying, they will not minister to him. If he dies, they will not drop a tear over his grave, or abate their revels for a moment. How striking the contrast between the Christian and the sinner in these respects! (*W. G. Pascoe.*)

The nature and consequences of sin.—I. Here is, first, **THE NATURE OF SIN.** It is a departure from our Heavenly Father—a determination to be independent of God—a taking of the ordering of our lives into our own hands—a chafing under the restraints alike of the Divine law and the Divine love, and a setting up of ourselves as our own gods. Cunningly did Satan say to our common parents at the first—"Ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil"; and still this self-assertion lies at the root of our alienation of heart from God, and rebellion of life against Him. But yet more, this alienation of heart is from a Father; this rebellion is against One who has done more for us than ever mother did for the son of her love. We condemn, as the most culpable of all things, the cruelty of a son to his venerable parent; and we have scarcely language strong enough to express our detestation of such conduct as that of Absalom to his father. Yet, in God's sight, we have been doing the very same thing, and we have given Him occasion to say concerning us, as Israel of old, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." II. But, secondly, we have here brought before us **THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN.** The first stage of iniquity is riotous joy. We must not keep that out of view. There is a pleasure in it, of a sort; for if this were not so, men would not be found indulging in it at all. There must be some kind of exhilaration in the flowing bowl, or in the wild thrill of sensual gratification, or in the gains of dishonesty. In every sin there is something of riot. "Stolen waters are sweet," just, perhaps, because they are stolen; but the sweetness does not last long. It turns to bitterness in the belly; for, see, as the next result, the waste which it occasions. It wastes money, it wastes health, it wears the body to decay; but that is not the worst. These things here are set forth as but the outward indications of the waste of the soul. And, in truth, what a blasting thing sin is on the human spirit! How many who, in their youth, gave high promise of mental greatness, are now reduced to the merest drivellers, unable either to speak or write save under the influence of opium or alcohol! There is nothing in iniquity that can give contentment to the spirit. "God has made us for Himself, and our souls are restless till they rest themselves in Him." We could call into court nearly as many witnesses as there have been hunters of happiness, mighty Nimrods in the chase of pleasure and fame and favour. We might ask the statesman, and as we wished him a happy new year, Lord Dundas would answer, "It had need to be a happier than the last, for I never knew one happy day in it." We might ask the successful lawyer, and the wariest, luckiest, most self-complacent of them all would answer, as Lord Eldon was privately recording when the whole Bar envied the Chancellor, "A few weeks will send me to dear Encombe, as a short resting-place betwixt vexation and the grave." We might ask the golden millionaire, "You must be a happy man, Mr. Rothschild." "Happy! me happy! What! happy! when just as you are going to dine you have a letter placed in your hand, saying, 'If you don't send me £500, I will blow your brains out!'" Happy! when you have to sleep with pistols at your pillows." We might ask the world-famed warrior, and get for answer the "Miserere" of the Emperor-Monk (Charles V.), or the sigh of a broken heart from St. Helena. Oh! shall we never become wise? Shall we never learn that there is nothing but misery while we are away from God? Ye who are seeking after happiness in earthly things, forbear. Ye are pursuing a quest more visionary than that of the child, who sets out to catch the pillars of the many-coloured rainbow in the far horizon. Never, never can you obtain what you are seeking, save in God. Turn, then, and beseech Him to give you that which you desire. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *The far country.*—A far country! Yes, indeed, it is a long and weary journey that the soul takes when it turns its back upon God. Shall we compare it to an ill-starred voyage from the tropics to the Polar Sea? I see yon gallant bark, as she pursues her northward course, gaily gliding over summer seas. She coasts along the shores of a vast continent, rich in tropical luxuriance and bathed in perennial sunshine;

but still as she passes on the gorgeous vision keeps fading from her view. She is northward bound. By and by things begin to wear a different aspect. She is sailing past lands of the Temperate Zone; vegetation is less luxurious, the sun is ever and again obscured, and when it shines lacks its old power. A few weeks more and there is another change; sombre pine forests clothe the mountain-shoulder now, and snowy summits begin to appear above them, and the air grows chill, and the sun seems wan and powerless. A little further, and soon the pine woods are left behind, and ever and again huge, towering icebergs begin to appear. But still the cry is "Northward!" and the day grows shorter and the long nights colder, and the pitiless blast whistles through the frosted shrouds, and in the next scene there is the ship in "thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice," hemmed in by frozen seas, and far as the eye can reach, one weary waste of desolation, a region of perpetual winter, bereft of almost every sign of life, a place of the shadow of death. Such, as it seems to me, is a picture of the fatal progress of the human soul along the way of Cain, as he drifts further and further from the Divine influence, and his nobler impulses are checked, and his warmer affections chilled, and his holier energies paralyzed, while the heart is hardened with the deceitfulness of sin. Thus it is that men turn their backs on the true summer land, of the soul in God, and drift into the perpetual winter of godlessness. Yes, there is the chill of a perpetual winter in that tragic word godless. A godless heart! a heart whose highest honour it should have been to be the very dwelling-place of God; a heart that might have been warmed and brightened with the sunshine of His love, but now cold and indifferent to all His influences; a lonesome, desolate, orphaned heart, robbed of its highest honour and denied its holiest privileges; a desecrated shrine, a deserted temple, and yet an empty, weary, disappointed heart, that nothing else can satisfy. A godless home! where human love is never sanctified by the higher love of heaven, where all the purest and truest earthly pleasures that the great Father gives are received as mere matters of course without any recognition of the Giver, where His smile never adds lustre to human joys, and His sympathizing comfort is never sought in moments of anxiety and sorrow; a home where cares weigh heavily because there is no heavenly Friend to bear them, where strifes and dissensions are never stilled by the Prince of Peace, where "the daily round, the common task," carry no blessing along with them because God is not recognized there. A godless life-work! "It is but lost labour that ye haste to rise up early, and so late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness." "Labour not for the bread that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto eternal life"; but this perishing bread is all that we have left to labour for when once we have broken away from God. And so men scheme, and plan, and speculate, and toil, and fret, and hurry, and push and sacrifice much of ease and comfort that they might enjoy; and all for what? What does commercial success mean but sooner or later the loss of all that we have been spending our lives in trying to gain, just because God is excluded from our busy lives? Worst of all, a godless religion! for religion may be adopted and its observances respected, not as a means of bringing us nearer to God, but rather as a means of making us the better contented to dispense with Him. Our conscience is deadened by the thought that we come up to the conventional standard in religion, and we may be less likely to be alarmed at the thought of our spiritual danger than if we had no religion at all; and yet our religion may never have brought us into any actual personal and spiritual contact with God. Oh, my brethren, with whatever other curse we may be cursed, God save us from the curse of a godless religion! A godless end! Ah! this seems too terrible to contemplate, and yet we must contemplate it; for it is set before us that we may take warning by contemplating it. My friends, I would have you remember that this far country of which I have been speaking is but the frontier, so to speak, of the far realms of death. This going forth from the presence of God, what is it but incipient death? Already the wandering soul is drifting away from the one life-centre of the universe—the heart of God; and every day's journey he takes is a journey deathward, until at length the terrible word "Depart," falling from the Judge's lips, sets the seal of doom upon the inexorable Nemesis of a lifelong sin. (*W. M. Hay Aiken, M.A.*) *Man going into the far country.*—As it is less labour to stay a stone before it be moved, than turn it back again when it is in the tumbling; thus, then, goeth a man away further and further from the Lord by multiplication of his sins, as a man by multiplication of his steps goeth further away from the place wherein he was. It should therefore be our first care to beware of the beginnings of sin; and the next to beware we multiply not our sin, lest by so doing we go far from the Lord. (*Bishop Cowper.*)

The far country :—This far country, then, is to be estimate by the distance of man's will and affections from the Lord, that is, *Longinqua regio dissimilitudinis*, for then is a man farthest from God, when he is most unlike unto God. So the Lord Himself expounds it; "What iniquity have your fathers found in Me, that they are gone far from Me, walking after vanity, and are become vain?" And the apostle to the Ephesians, comparing their former estate by nature, with that which now they were renewed to by grace, he saith, "Ye which once were far off, are now made near by the blood of Jesus Christ." Whereof we see it is sins that makes to be far from the Lord, grace again that brings us near unto Him. Things that are far off were they never so precious and excellent, either else we see them not at all, or then they seem far less to us than they are. The sun is many times more than the earth, yet do we account it less than ourselves. The reason is, that it is far from us when men travel so far to the south, that the north pole in their sight comes near to the earth, and at length the sight thereof is intercepted from them by the earth, it is a sure argument they are far from it; even so, when men esteem the incomprehensible majesty of God, who by infinite degrees surmounts the beauty of the sun to be but small in their eyes, or when in their imagination they draw down the Lord to assimilate or compare Him to anything in earth, or when in their affections the earth comes in between their souls and the sight of the Lord, and the love of the earth prevails; it is an argument such miserable souls are far from the Lord. (*Ibid.*)

Wasted his substance with riotous living.—*Wasted substance* :—The English word "substance" is ambiguous. It may mean the pith and marrow of a man's body, or the contents of his purse. It may be taken both ways at once; for these two kinds of substance generally melt away together, in the bitter experience of the prodigal. His fortune is lost; his health has failed; and his pleasures, such as they were, have fled. The pleasures, when they flee, leave behind them stings and terrors in the conscience. The youth begins to be in want—in want of food, and clothing, and home; in want of friends, in want of peace—in want of all things. A waif drifting towards the eternal shore—a lost soul. Such is the track of a prodigal. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*) *Waste* :—One tragic word seems to describe this young man's career of fatuous folly and sin in that far country, and oh, my brethren, it describes the lives of many more besides him! and that word is waste. "He wasted his substance in riotous living." Yes, I say it describes the lives of many more beside him. Shall I be wrong in saying it describes the lives of all who do not according to the measure of their light and knowledge live to God? The man who has turned his back on God, and who regards himself as his own, has already entered upon a course of waste, even though he do not, like the prodigal, waste his substance in riotous living. In the case of those who emulate the prodigal in leading dissipated and profligate lives, the waste is as obvious as it was in his case, and unhappily such cases are by no means rare. It is astonishing how some men will waste things that we all value, and none, you would think, would willingly be stripped of. Take, for example, money, or social position, or health, or natural affection. No sane man doubts that each of these has a value of its own; indeed the general tendency of men is perhaps to value them too highly; yet what multitudes of men ruthlessly waste these precious possessions, as if they were not of the slightest value, and as if it were an object with them to get rid of them. And if you notice carefully, it is just the spirit of independence that leads them to do this. They conceive that liberty consists in doing whatever passing impulse may dispose them to do; but they feel that were they under the Divine control they would be continually subjected to checks and restraints which would interfere with their impulses, and prevent them from doing what at the moment they might wish. So the language of their hearts is, "Let us break His bands asunder, and cast away His cords from us." And they do exactly as they please, and the result is—waste. It is indeed surprising what exploits of waste some men contrive to perform under the influence of this habit of wilful self-pleasing. I heard of a Russian nobleman not long ago who was heir to a fortune of some £400,000 a year, yet it had not been in his hands very long before he was actually a bankrupt. It surely requires some ingenuity to get through such a fortune, and yet somehow he managed it. A friend of mine was called to the bedside of a poor miserable wretch who was dying of delirium tremens. I used the word bedside, but, strictly, bed there was none in the room where the dying man lay in his last lucid interval before the terrible end. There he lay, bloated, poverty-stricken, filthy, scarcely covered with the rags which were his only apology for a bed; there he lay dying in stony despair; yet he told my friend that he had once

been a prosperous London man of business, and had been worth his fifty thousand pounds. I visited a large seaside town a few years ago, and it was thought desirable, as multitudes thronged the esplanade, to send men with boards along it. I was told that one of the men, who carried the boards for a slender pittance of a few pence a day, was the son and heir of a man who had been once, and I believe continued to be up to his death, one of the richest shopkeepers in that large town; yet here was his son in absolute destitution, and he had brought it all upon himself by waste. But why should I multiply instances? Alas! there are few of us that have not had cases brought under our notice of the almost incredible folly exhibited by those who think themselves sensible men in this respect. I want to lay stress upon the fact that the folly arises from our taking a false view of what money is, and of what our relations to it are. If a man looks upon money as simply a means of purchasing self-gratification in whatever form it seems most attractive, it is not surprising that he should squander it lightly under the influence of a passing impulse. Considerations of prudence and forecast do not weigh against the claims of self-indulgence. The object of money seems to the spendthrift to be to procure enjoyment, and this is to be gained, it seems to him, rather by spending it than by keeping it, and therefore he proceeds to spend it. And so he wastes his substance, not because he spends, but because he regards that which he spends as his own to do exactly what he likes with. Oh, how many men are all the poorer for their fortunes! But money is not the only thing we waste when we turn our backs upon God, and we can trace the operation of the same law in every case. God has given to all of us faculties, and to some of us special gifts and talents. If we put these in His hands, as the elder brother gave back to the father his portion of goods, they must all contribute to our true wealth. If, on the other hand, we claim them for ourselves, and, regarding them as our own, turn our backs upon the Father, that which should have been our gain begins to be moral loss, and we are all the poorer for our natural endowments. Well used wealth contributes to the formation of a generous and godlike character, it helps to enrich your moral nature; and thus it is actually true that the hand of the liberal maketh rich. The material substance, which we can under no circumstances keep, passes from us, but it leaves us morally and spiritually the richer for its use. On the other hand, when we regard our substance merely as a means for self-gratification, our gain becomes positive moral loss. The abuse or unholy use of our substance means selfishness increased and developed, self-control weakened, the love of luxury, the passion for self-indulgence rendered more insatiable than ever; while our benevolence is diminished, and our sympathies are curtailed, the heart hardened, and the gain in the capacity to help and enlighten others; gain in the enjoyment of ever-enlarging visions of truth; gain in the acquisition of that spiritual knowledge which in the moral world must always as truly be power as is secular knowledge in the physical world. A consecrated intellect is wealth to the Church, wealth to the world, wealth to its possessor. But if you take your intellect out of God's hands and regard it as your own, the process of waste at once begins. Your very gifts become snares. Intellectual pride breeds doubt, and doubt develops into crude, hasty unbelief. Or intellectual success induces self-conceit, which is one of the worst moral diseases that man's nature can be afflicted with. Or intellectual gratification becomes the object for which the man lives, only to find, with Solomon, that in much knowledge is much sorrow; and that, while the head may be filled, the heart remains empty. For we cannot live for knowledge without finding out more and more how little we know, and how little we can know. And this tends to render life one long, bitter disappointment; while, as the swiftly-flying years bring the end nearer, we have the melancholy conviction forcing itself upon us, that even that little can only be retained for a short time. "Whether there be knowledge," says St. Paul, "it shall vanish away." It is only waste after all. Or has God given you personal influence, springing either from your natural character and gifts, or from your social position? More or less, I believe, He has given this to each of us; a great deal to some. What are you doing with it? Consecrate it to God, and use it for the good of man, and then your portion of goods in the Father's hands shall ever go on increasing, and your satisfaction shall ever become deeper and truer as you use this gift for its proper object. Who shall describe the blessedness which flows back, to him who so exercises it, from a well-used influence? and who shall say where its effects will end, in time and in eternity? But if this influence is used merely for self-gratification, to minister to our love of popularity or of power, once again our gift becomes our bane, and exercises a most injurious effect upon our moral nature. ministering to our

pride, and promoting our selfishness, and thus defeating the very purpose for the sake of which the gift was originally bestowed. So here again we have nothing but waste—the good that might have been done left undone for ever, and actual harm done both to ourselves and others through that very gift which should have been for the benefit of all—and, as a result, instead of a heart full of true gratification and satisfaction, the terrible awakening by and by to find that all this influence has been cast into the wrong scale. Oh, think of the anguish of remorse that must fill the heart at the discovery that we have helped to drag others down by the abuse of the very gift that should have raised them, and that we are perishing not alone in our iniquity! (*W. M. Hay Aitken, M.A.*) *The law restraining a prodigal*:—*The Evening Standard*, Friday, Feb. 26, 1886, contained the following: (From our correspondent.)—Paris, Thursday Night. —Considerable sensation has been caused in French social and financial circles by the appointment of a curator or Conseil judiciaire to M. Raymond Seillière, a member of the well-known family of bankers and army contractors. This appointment of a Conseil judiciaire in restraint of prodigality is a peculiarity of French law adopted or inherited from the Roman law. Supposing A squanders his money and the inheritance of his children, his next of kin are empowered to apply to the law courts to deprive him of the administration of his fortune, and transfer it to an advocate or solicitor. No matter what his age may be, the person thus dealt with is reduced to a state of legal infancy, and no debt he may contract is recoverable unless his curator has sanctioned it. In the case of M. Raymond Seillière, the application, which was made at the suit of his brother, was grounded on the fact that within twelve years he had run through a fortune of twelve millions of francs (£480,000 sterling), and had in addition contracted loans to the amount of five millions (£200,000 sterling). One of the creditors opposed on the plea that the suit was instituted solely to enable M. Seillière to evade the payment of his debts. The court, however, granted the application. M. Raymond Seillière was thirty-nine years of age. *Wasted substance*:—He had not been gone long before his “gathering” comes to be “scattering.” No doubt, he had his pleasure in all this wasting. There is a revelling and a merriment in these riotous passions. It is soon gone; but still there is pleasure, though it is short-lived, in sin and squandering. The passions soon grow dull—the gilding wears off—the music and the dance grow insipid and wearisome, the drunkard’s cups, in time, deaden, but don’t intoxicate. Even Byron, before his life was half spent, was forced to acknowledge—

“My days are in the yellow leaf,
The flowers, the fruits of love are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief,
Are mine alone.”

There is the sinner, worn, weary, wasted; he has wasted his time—wasted his precious season for preparing for eternity—wasted his own energies and power—wasted his parent’s care, and labour, and no shudder felt now when words of foul meaning pollute another’s lips, or the name of God is uttered in blaspheming rage. Oh, how altered! But all this, very significant as it is, the parable passes by. It is not so much what he saw or heard in that strange land as what he wasted, and how he wasted it, that is here marked down—“He wasted his substance with riotous living.” (*W. B. Mackenzie, M.A.*) *Riotous living*:—Nothing can be nobler than a true and thorough manhood, where, amid the seductions of sense, the soul still retains the mastery of itself by retaining its loyalty to God. On the other hand, it is deeply distressing to find the higher nature dethroned or in thralldom. Wild stories circulate in many lands. In Northern Europe they tell how a child has been carried off by wolves, and brought up amongst them—taught to live in wolfish fashion, sleeping in the forest, joining in the hunt of the reindeer or aurochs, and drinking with savage delight the blood of the palpitating prey. And in Africa the like story is told—how the man has been kidnapped by the baboon, and, hurried up the mountain, has spent amidst these hideous monsters a horrible captivity. The risk is real. The climate may be good, the settlement may promise all that heart can wish, and the vicinity may be so far cleared as to make the immediate homestead tolerably secure; but it is folly to deny all danger. A wise man will be cautious; and if cautious he need not be nervous. It is only right and kind to give warning; and pleasant as is the lot of your inheritance, it is well to remember that the thickets and steep places

are haunted. Frightful ogres frequent them, and they are sure to sally forth on the heedless wanderer. There are even instances on record where they have vaulted over the enclosure and carried off from the threshold some hapless victim. The names of three of the best known and most mischievous are—the Lust of the Eye, the Lust of the Flesh, and the Pride of Life; or, as they are sometimes called, Vanity, or the Love of Display; Sensuality, or the Love of Low Pleasure; and the Affectation of Fashion, or the Keeping-up of Appearances. For a hundred years England has yielded no scholar comparable to Richard Porson. With a memory in which words and things were alike imperishable, and with that marvellous intuition which enabled him to personate any author, Greek or Roman, and in the broken parchment or faded manuscript at once perceive what *Æschylus* or *Tacitus* had meant to say, he had withal a wit which made him welcome at the board of rich and clever men; and to feed the wit they plied the wine, till in floods of liquor wit and wisdom both were drowned, and, the remains of the scholar buried in mere beastliness, the sot disappeared from society. For a hundred years Ireland has yielded no dramatist, no orator, equal to Richard Brinsley Sheridan; but even for that brilliant genius, whose versatile talents brought London to his feet, and carried captive the senate, strong drink was too powerful, and, in place of bouquets and ribbons, with writs and executions showering around him, he lay on his desolate couch bankrupt in character as well as in fortune, and would have been carried off in his blankets to the debtor's gaol had not the apparitor of a mightier tribunal stepped in before the sheriff's officer and claimed the prisoner. For a hundred years—nay, through all the years—Scotland has yielded no poet who could seize the heart of the nation as it was seized by Robert Burns—master alike of its pathos, humour, chivalry. Alas! that pinions capable of such a flight as “Bruce at Bannockburn” and “Mary in Heaven,” should have come down to get smeared and bird-limed on the tapster's bough; alas! that from the Cottar's Saturday Evening he should have passed away to the companionship of drunken ploughboys and coarse bullies in their night-long carousals in low taverns. Like the spear, some ten or twelve fathoms long, with which the Vancouver Indian ploughs the river-bed, and the barbed point comes off in the first great sturgeon which it pierces, the tenacious fibre uncoiling as he flies; so, paddling over the surface of society, it is with a long shaft that the demon of Drunkenness explores for his victims; but when one of his barbs gets fairly through the mail it usually fixes and is fast. The line is a long one, and will hold for years. It marks the victim; and the first time he rises another dart strikes through his liver, and then another, and at last a great many—the social glass leading on to the glass suggestive or the glass inspiring, and the glass restorative leading on to the glass strength-giving, and that again to glasses fast and frequent—glasses care-drowning, conscience-coaxing, grief-dispelling—till, gasping and dying, the hulk is towed ashore, and pierced through with many sins, weak, wasted, worthless, the victim gives up the ghost, leaving in the tainted air a disastrous memory. Whether coarse or refined, riot speedily wastes the reveller's “substance.” Not only does it sap the constitution, and soften the brain, and shatter the nerves, and enfeeble the mind, but it exhausts the estate, and soon brings the spendthrift to poverty. And if the passion still urge and the fear of God has departed, wild methods will be tried to meet the demand and assuage the frantic craving. Keepsakes will be sold or pledged, to part with which would once on a time have looked like sacrilege. Money will be borrowed as long as any one will lend it, and then it will be taken from the till, or intercepted on the way from a customer or correspondent; and thus—it is a tale a thousand times told—dissipation leads on to dishonesty; and in keeping up the jovial life, nay, in merely keeping up appearances, character will be vilely cast away. Our hearts are weak, and we have continual need to pray, “Deliver us from evil”; for temptations are sometimes terrible. When in front of his own cathedral Bishop Hooper was fastened to the stake and the fire was slowly burning, they held up a pardon, and told him that he had only to say the word and walk at liberty. “If you love my soul, away with it!” was the exclamation of the martyr as every tortured fibre called for pity, but the loyal spirit revolted from the wickedness. So there may come a fiery trial where the adversary has got in pledge your income, your earthly prospects, your parents or your children, and asks if you will be so infatuated as to cast them away when the stroke of a pen, the pronouncing of a word, a nod or sign would suffice and save the whole. When the furnace is thus seven-times heated it will need much grace, in view of the proffered bribe, to cry, “Away with it!” and yet, through His timely succour, who, in the days of His

flesh and in view of an awful alternative, poured forth strong crying and tears, such ordeals have been encountered by men of like passions with ourselves, and from this lesser Gethsemane they have emerged with spirit softened and character confirmed, enriched by the loss, perfected by the suffering. However, it was not by a roaring lion, but by a plausible tempter that man was first led into evil; and our greatest danger arises from the subtlety of Satan and the pleasures of sin. If you would pass innocently through a difficult world, keep within the rules. Let your life be open, your eye single, your walk in the broad light of day. If a mistake is committed, lose no time in acknowledging it; and beware of getting complicated with unprincipled or low-minded companions. They will be sure to use you as the cloak or the catspaw of their own designs, and then, when their purpose is served, or when the day of disclosure arrives, they will sacrifice you and save themselves. Keep within the homestead. If compelled to quit the parental roof, cast yourself all the rather on your heavenly Father's grace and guidance. And do not forsake the sanctuary. (*James Hamilton, D.D.*) *The temptations to expense*:—The great temptations to expense are the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life; and to these the great antidote is, not a limited income so much as a large self-denial. It is the lust of the flesh when the little boy spends all his halfpence on sugar-plums. It is the lust of the eye when the peer cannot resist the porcelain of Sevres or the mosaic of Rome, but exhausts his estate in adorning his palace. It is the pride of life when the servant flaunts in finery and lets her parents starve; when the merchant spends on his mansion or his equipage all by which his neighbour or the world might be profited. But just as people can be profuse who are not earning a penny, so there are rich men who do not riot, and who in the generous use of their income enjoy a continual feast. If self-denying, you, too, will be rich. From personal expenditure saving all that you can, you will find it available for the most blessed of all bestowments; and in paying the school-fees of a younger brother, in a thoughtful gift to a sister, in lightening the burden of a toil-worn father, in promoting the comfort of a faithful old servant who can work no longer, in a subscription to the missionary society or the Sunday-school excursion, in contributing to the happiness or welfare of others, you will reap the Divine reward of self-denial. (*Ibid.*) *Wasted lives*:—Of five rich young men whom the Rev. A. Wylie knew, one, he tells us, shot himself, another died of *delirium tremens*, another was drowned in the midst of dissipation, a fourth was stabbed in a gambling-house, and the fifth, assisted home by a policeman at two o'clock in the morning, was found dead on his father's hall floor. *Carlyle and the crust*:—It is related of Carlyle, that as he one day approached a street crossing, he suddenly stopped, and stooping down picked something out of the mud, at the risk of being run over by one of the many carriages in the street. With his bare hands he brushed the mud off, and placed the substance on a clean spot on the kerb-stone. "That," said he, in a tone as sweet and in words as beautiful as I ever heard, "is only a crust of bread. Yet I was taught by my mother never to waste, and above all, bread, more precious than gold, the substance that is the same to the body that the mind is to the soul. I am sure that the little sparrows, or a hungry dog, will get nourishment from that bit of bread." *Folly of leading a gay life*:—A practical illustration of the folly of leading a gay life came under the notice of the surgical staff of Charing Cross Hospital in August, 1880. John Wallberoff, about fifty-five years of age, residing at a common lodging-house in Westminster, asked the surgeons to attend to an injury which he had received to his chest, which, he said, had been caused by the police while he was under their charge that morning. The man had a military appearance, but was in a shockingly tattered and neglected condition, with scarcely any shoes to his feet. While his chest was being attended to he gave the doctor a brief history of himself. He said he had graduated as a B.A. at Trinity College, Cambridge, and as a proof of his classical education he gave quotations from Virgil and Homer, and challenged the doctor to a competition in mathematics. He said his grandfather was once a governor-general of the forces in India, and he himself had held a commission in the army. His mother was a handsome and, he regretted to say, gay woman, and, following the example of his parent, her son had led a life of pleasure, and now, instead of being, as he once was, in receipt of a yearly income of £1,500, he was in the pitiable plight of being without home, money, or friends. *A fast young man*:—A fast young man! He is a lovely picture to some eyes. He leads the fashion. If anything is stirring in the neighbourhood where mirth and laughter, songs and revelling can be found, he is conspicuous amongst those who attend. If anything is carried on that needs a

greater stock of impudence than is common with men he can always command it. He is a fast young man. He is fast in acquiring habits that old debauchees take years in arriving at. He is fast in learning slang phrases with which his speech is spiced. He is fast in breaking loose from home restraints at an age when every sensible young man values a father's counsels and a mother's prayers. He is fast in leading others, not so far advanced as himself, into mischief, debauchery, and vice. He is fast in polluting virtuous hearts, and in bringing desolation into once happy homes. But there are other things in which he is fast. He is fast in sowing the seeds of disease in his constitution, and inducing premature old age. He is fast in driving out the forms of virtue from his soul, and in filling up their places with the filthiest forms of sin. He is fast in getting ready for the condemnation of God, and is fast in going to perdition! (*W. G. Pascoe.*) When he had spent all there arose a mighty famine.—*The fruits of sin* :—What are the fruits of sin? We see in this parable, and we know from our experience of human life, what the sinner himself thinks of it. He looks upon it as an assertion of liberty. Now, we are called upon in these parables to contemplate our Lord's view of the same subject. He shows us in all three of them that sin has a kind of liberty which does not belong to the life of holiness; but He shows us also that this so-called liberty is no true liberty, and He reminds us that it leads to misery, destitution, and the most degrading bondage. I. **THE WASTEFULNESS OF SIN.** We can easily see how extravagance, heedlessness, and idleness waste men's temporal possessions. We cannot so easily discern the wasting of our spiritual possessions. Take first the effects of sin in the bodies of men. This frame of ours is a thing far more sensitive and delicate than most of us imagine, and sin often leaves traces upon it which can never be effaced. The sins of the flesh do visibly waste a portion of that substance which God divides to man. But there are ravages committed by sin which, however naked and open they may be to the eye of Him with whom we have to do, are not easily discerned by the eye of man, especially by the eye which is itself clouded and discoloured by sin. Sin, in all its forms, is a waster. In its more decent and respectable forms it may produce less apparent desolation, and yet the work of destruction may be as surely carried on. There are many things lost from a man's soul of which he has little knowledge until some startling revelation is made unexpectedly, or the light of God's truth and Spirit shines in and illumines the inner darkness. The corrupting and blighting of the affections, the hardening of the heart, the destruction of that tenderness of conscience which is one of man's strongest safeguards, the weakening of the will, so that it loses its power of resistance to evil, the lost appreciation and enjoyment of the innocent pleasures of life, the utter inability to find any satisfaction in higher and better things—this is a fearful enumeration, and yet it is but a portion of the loss which is sustained through the ravages of sin. No tongue or pen can describe it, for no heart of man can know it. II. **THE SERVITUDE OF SIN.** One should suppose that the sense of misery, arising from the destitution of sin, would drive the suffering sinner to the place of penitence and to the throne of grace. And so it sometimes does. But frequently the reverse happens. Such is often the awful deceitfulness of sin. Nay, such is oftentimes the awful deceitfulness of sin, that those who have reaped its bitter fruits have turned from one evil to another, in the hope of effacing the results or the remembrance of previous transgression; or else, and perhaps this is commoner, they have descended to deeper depths of sin, have gone the whole way that it was possible for them to go, have drunk to the very dregs the cup of misery and death, in the mad hope that life and happiness might after all be found within it. And thus have men sunk down into that awful condition in which, instead of using their passions as instruments for self-gratification, they have been governed and controlled by them. For a time they were their servants, but now they have become their masters. It is a bondage which is only too common, although sometimes its chains are unseen. In some cases, it is plain and clear and undeniable; in others it is disguised and often invisible. Take the case of the man who is addicted to excessive drinking. I have seen men who were amiable, accomplished, fascinating, fall under the power of this demon. I have seen men, the superior of their fellows in intellect and energy, who seemed to be made to rule over men, become themselves the slaves of intemperance. And slavery and bondage are the right expressions to apply to their condition. I have seen the most frantic efforts made to escape from this tyranny. The shame, the misery, the ruin which flowed from it had been pressed on the mind of its victim by a friend. "Be a man," he said to the poor crouching slave. "Be a man. Stand up. Assert your freedom,

as a child of God. Seek His grace, which will not be withheld from you, and by the power of that grace you will arise and beat down this enemy under your feet." And courage returned to the trembling heart; and the man who had lain prostrate under the throne of this idol summoned up new strength, collected his energies, and resolved to fight the battle over again, and win it by the help of God. And sometimes it has been done. And sometimes, alas! it has not been done. **III. THE DEGRADATION OF SIN.** It was enough, one might think, that the free son should become a bond slave. No! He must be taught all that was involved in slavery. He was sent into the fields to feed swine, unclean beasts, which it was a degradation for a son of Abraham to have anything to do with; and there he was "fain to fill his belly with the husks which the swine did eat"; for no man gave him better food. It is the lowest depth reached at last. It is a picture of men "serving divers lusts and pleasures"; and, awful as it is, it does not exceed the truth. Many of us play with sin, trifle with it, not knowing what it is. Like the playful tiger's cub, it has not gained all its fearful strength, and manifests but little of all its latent savage character. If we could follow it in its fearful descent, and see how it sinks deeper and deeper in the mire of shame and infamy, we should realize more clearly what is meant by the degradation of sin. "What fruit had ye in those things of which ye are now ashamed?" asks St. Paul, well knowing what the answer must be. Sin is the parent of shame. (*W. R. Clark, M.A.*) *The sinning soul a sufferer*.—The soul was made for God, and for delight in God. Sin prevents this end, and therefore there must be suffering and loss. **I. IT MUST BE A SUFFERER.** It carries within a torment which the poet has pictured under the figure of twin serpents. Sin may be awhile alone, but it is sure to bring forth suffering. 1. Because God is what He is. He cannot deny Himself. Warmth excludes its opposite, cold; light its opposite, darkness; and life, death. God, being holy, must be an active opponent to sin. 2. Because man is what he is. Conscience only applauds right-doing, but bites back in remorse for sin committed. A chaplain was preaching in India, when a deadly cobra crawled into the aisle. It was despatched without interrupting the service. Passing out after meeting, a native struck his foot against the head of the dead reptile. Instantly he cried aloud in agony, for an envenomed fang had pierced his flesh. Remedies were unavailing, and he soon died. So the memory of sin is like a poisoned fang in the breast. 3. Because of the necessity of law. Stanley never could have led his band of barbarians across the dark continent had he not subjected them all to stern, rigid law. One of them murdered his fellow. It was right that he should receive two hundred lashes, and be chained till delivered into the hands of proper authorities. God's righteous law has its penalties. Penalty is suffering. 4. Experience teaches that a sinning soul is a sufferer. It is always so in the long run. **Byron. II. THE KIND OF SUFFERING.** 1. It is want. Sin must starve the soul, as the plant pines for sunshine and cannot live on candle-light. 2. Friendlessness. 3. Slavery. The dominion of habit was illustrated in Robert Burns, who said that he would go for a jug of whisky, though it were guarded by one who would surely shoot him in the act—"for," said he, "I could not help it." 4. Degradation and utter loneliness. In the Sistine Chapel is a picture by Angelo, which paints a victim in the grasp of a fiend. Yet the fangs in his flesh are not so tormenting as is the mental anguish which the loss of heaven occasions. This absorbs his whole thought. (*W. Hoyt, D.D.*) *A mighty famine*.—Extravagance soon "brings the noble to nimpence," and in the far country it is not far that nimpence will go. But there may be so mighty a famine and so great, that even the noble will not buy the loaf of bread. One of the most pitiful incidents in the history of British genius is the death of Chatterton. We by no means quote it as a case of riotous living; but it will illustrate the "want" which comes over the spirit when other resources fail, and the Father's house is far away. When a mere boy of seventeen he had passed off, in the name of an ancient English monk, poems of his own, with the archaic style so admirably simulated, and the historical allusions so adroitly managed, that for a time many clever men were taken in, and surmised no forgery. Elated by the success of this imposture, and conscious of no common powers, from Bristol he came up to London. There he promised himself a career of fame and fortune; and as he visited the theatres, and watched the grand equipages floating past, he saw in no distant vision the day when his verses should be in the mouths of men, and when the doors of the lordliest saloons would open to the poet. But the fame was slow in coming, and meanwhile the money failed. Hampered by no restraints of conscience, he made up his mind to pass

himself off for a surgeon, and get appointed to a ship; but before he could carry his unprincipled scheme into execution, he found himself quite penniless. "Heaven send you the comforts of Christianity," he wrote to a correspondent; "I request them not, for I am no Christian." Bitterly boasting his disdain of Christianity, and his independence of it, he fell back on his own resources, and a fortnight after, a jury brought in a verdict of *felo de se* on a strange self-willed youth found dead in his little room in Brook Street, Holborn. He cared not for "the comforts of Christianity," and so when the mighty famine arose—when editors no longer cared for his effusions, and when the frauds and figments of years began to collapse—with hunger in the cupboard, and with heartless Muses staring at him so hard and stony—the trials which in a Christian bring out the mettle and make the man, in the case of poor Chatterton left no resource save arsenic and impotent anathemas on human kind. Reverting to the riotous living: not only does it exhaust the worldly substance, but by exhausting health and spirits, it destroys the power of enjoyment. Poor as are the joys of sense, it is a stupid policy which would distil into a single cup every pleasure, and in one frantic moment drain it dry. Where life and reason have survived the wild experiment, the zest of existence is gone, and waking up to a flat and colourless world, fastidious and fretful, blasted and *blasé*, in a frequent loathing of life and a general contempt of mankind, the voluptuary carries to the grave the sins of his youth. The Most High has so constituted the mind of man that the indulgence of the malevolent affections itself is misery; and of all the paths which at life's outset invite the inexperienced traveller, the surest to pierce through with many sorrows is the path of sensual indulgence. It is a vain attempt—

"With things of earthly sort, with aught but God,
With aught but moral excellence, and truth, and love,
To fill and satisfy the immortal soul."

But you are not mocked by your Maker. Those great and glorious objects exist for which He has given you an affinity, and towards which, in their most exalted intervals, the highest powers in your nature aspire. There is truth, there is goodness, there is God. There is the life of Jesus recorded in the Book; there is the spirit of God now working in the world. Ponder that life till, associated with a living Redeemer, it shines around your path a purifying protecting presence. And pray for that spirit, till under His kindly teaching you "taste and see that the Lord is good"—till expanded affections find an infinite object—till He who has thus strengthened your heart is become your portion for ever. (*James Hamilton, D.D.*)

The degradation:—Snow quickly melts when the thaw comes; and "a fool and his money are soon parted." I have heard of people who had suddenly succeeded to a legacy which they had not sense to keep; and who, indeed, were not sober till all their money was exhausted. Such a rapid race did this young rake of the parable run. I. THE FAMINE. "Ills," the proverb says, "never come singly." That he had reached the bottom of his purse was bad enough! but, to make matters worse, at the same time "there arose a mighty famine in the land." In ancient days a failure of the harvest spread dearth and death all around, even as, a few years ago, the famine of Orissa, where the same Oriental mode of life continues, left millions of corpses on the arid plains of India. Thanks to our commercial connection with the ends of the earth, and the abolition of our Corn Laws, it is not likely that such a lack of "the staff of life" will ever be felt within our borders again, as our forefathers have experienced in their day. The effect produced upon our young master's circumstances was immediate—he began to be in want. What a transition from fulness to emptiness—from wasteful extravagance to absolute inability to obtain the necessaries of life! Now he would begin to wish that he had some of the golden guineas back again which he had so recklessly thrown away, and that he had husbanded the large resources which had been so unsparingly placed at his command. The prodigal hungered; but he did not at this stage think of returning to his father. Some transgressors take less of chastisement and grief to melt them down, and others more. He seems to have been specially hardened. He was too proud to go back yet. So "he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country." II. This is the second point to which we call attention in this chapter: THE FEE. A few days ago, in this city of my habitation, a larger number than usual of agricultural people were to be seen in our streets, for it was the hiring market for the next half-year.

Hundreds who came into Glasgow in the morning, not knowing who their master was to be, or where their residence might be situated throughout the summer, during the course of the day came to know these important facts—important, because their destiny for good or evil might be largely influenced by the event. Poor things! as I saw many of them the worse for liquor, I thought they did not seem to be in a very fit state for forming a cool judgment, or for departing to their new homes. Doubtless some of them met with good masters, and some of them with bad ones. Some of them will rejoice in the decisions of the day, and bless their good fortune; whilst others will bitterly regret the same, and call their lot misfortune. “Which things are an allegory.” Christ is the good master; and Satan is the bad master. Christ may be called the Illustrious Stranger, who has come into our world to rectify its wrongs; while Satan is “the citizen of that country,” who has been in it from the first and has done it much evil. III. THE FEEDING. Feeding! that’s good news. He will be reconciled to his servitude, if only his wants may be supplied. But, alas! the feeding is not of himself but of others—and these others he would rather not have fed—“He sent him into his fields to feed swine.” This is another dexterous touch of the painter. No occupation could possibly have been more degrading than this in the eyes of Jews, since they regarded swine as ceremonially unclean. It is written in Lev. xi. 7, “And the swine, though he divide the hoof, and be cloven-footed, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean unto you.” Nor was this feeling of aversion towards these animals peculiar to the Jews; for Herodotus tells us that in Egypt swineherds were not permitted to mingle with civil society, nor to appear in the worship of the gods, nor would the very dregs of the people have any matrimonial connection with them. Truly now our young master would be stripped of his pride. A poor, ragged, outcast, hungry swineherd! Satan’s nobility sit on bad eminences. His peers are known by their deeper degradation. IV. THE FASTING. “He would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him.” The word in the original (*keratia*) does not mean, properly speaking, what we understand by husks, which are the outer integuments of fruit, but designates a leguminous fruit called in modern language the charub tree, which still grows in the South of Europe, the islands of the Mediterranean, and the North of Africa. It is sometimes called “John’s Bread,” from the tradition that it was the food used by John the Baptist during his wilderness life. On the beans of this tree the horses of the British cavalry were fed during the Peninsular war. It would appear that the famine which is referred to in the parable raged so severely that both man and beast were put upon short and spare allowance. In the fields, and when watching his unclean flock, the poor outcast would willingly have supplemented his own scanty meal by eating the raw, coarse fruits which the swine consumed; but “no man gave unto him.” He was not allowed to appropriate their portion. (*F. Ferguson, D.D.*) *Touch iron*:—A minister from a distance was preaching one Sabbath, in the parish church of St. Monan’s, in the last century, who did not know the strange superstitions of a fishing village. He was discoursing with tolerable fluency on the parable of the Prodigal Son. When he came to the words, “and he sent him into the fields to feed swine,” he thought that he heard a sudden and simultaneous murmur over his congregation, accompanied by an equally sudden and simultaneous movement. The explanation was that the sow is an unlucky animal among the fishermen, as it was unclean among Jews; and the murmur, which the astonished preacher heard proceeding from every lip, was “Touch iron”—for iron they regard as a charm against the harmful word; while the movement he observed was the effort of each individual to put his finger on the nearest nail in the wood-work of the old church—a murmur and a movement which were repeated much to his consternation, as in the sequel of his exposition he, all unconscious of his mistake, used the dreaded word. A good story, doubtless, to be told at a tea-table, or at a bright fire on a winter evening—and ministers, it is to be feared, by their frailties and mistakes, afford amusement now and then to curious and critical neighbourhoods. But whether the tale be an exaggeration or not, I wish to turn the table upon the story-tellers, and consecrate it to the service of Christ. Yes; ye who have sunk so low in the service of Satan, that he has sent you into the fields to feed swine—“Touch iron”; extend the finger of faith to the blessed nails of the cross, and, more potent than fabled talismanic charm, they will raise you to the dignity of the sons of God. Do you complain that your nature is bad—that as soon as a lion might be expected to become a lamb, or a swine—“Touch iron”; yea, “reach hither your hands and thrust them into his side,” and God’s

Spirit will give you clean hearts and right spirits. (*Ibid.*) *Dearth; or pain the end of sinful pleasure*:—The end of sinful pleasure is pain, the wealth of worldlings ends in fearful want. As the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream had an head of gold, but feet of clay; so the glorious show of this miserable life of sinful men concludes with shame. The plenty which Egypt had in seven years was eaten up by the seven years of famine following it. The pleasant river of Jordan is at length swallowed up by the salt sea, or loach of Sodom. (*Bishop Cowper.*) *Famine makers*:—Such men help to bring about famines, men who eat all and produce nothing, men who are consumers and non-producers. These are the men that make famines. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Sin costly*:—The service of sin is a costly service; all the portion of goods thou hast is not sufficient for it. (*Bishop Cowper.*) *Religion no waste*:—Wilt thou abide with the Lord, and serve Him? He shall teach thee to use His gifts to His glory and thy good; for the service of the Lord is easy, honourable, profitable, nothing is wasted, nothing is lost, that thou spendest in it. (*Ibid.*) *The folly of extravagance*:—To how much the portion of goods amounted which the younger son took with him we are not told; nor are we told how long it lasted. But once it is in the hands of a spendthrift, wonderful is the speed with which money disappears. As paragons of senseless profusion, Dante has handed down the names of Stricca and his companions, who sold their estates and bought a princely mansion where they might spend their days in revelry. Their horses' shoes were silver, and, if one came off, the servants were forbidden to pick it up; and, with like disdain of mean economy throughout, the united fortunes lasted only twenty months, and they finished off in the utmost misery. The Sienese spendthrifts have been often distanced in our living day; and the low taverns along the Thames, where our sailors waste their hard-won earnings—the hotels of Melbourne and San Francisco, where successful diggers fool away in a flash of riot the gold for which they have toiled so long, after a coarse and vulgar fashion could parallel the wildest waste of Heliogabalus or Lucullus. More remarkable than the speed with which the money disappears is the small satisfaction which it yields. If, like George Heriot with the king's acknowledgment, you had put the bank-notes on the hearth, and sent them flaming up the chimney, they would have left you far richer than those you have spent on reckless companions and riotous living. If, like Cleopatra, you had dissolved a pearl—if you had put together the income of years—all that has been spent on self-indulgence—perhaps in enticing others into sin—could you have put it all together, and, like the queenly jewel, dissipated it in dust and air, we might have been sorry for the idle sacrifice, but the wasted money would not have wasted you. Cleopatra had another pearl, the gift of peerless beauty. That gift was perverted and it hatched a serpent; it came back into her bosom—the asp which stung her. So with the possessions of the prodigal. Talents laid up in a napkin, pearls melted in vinegar, will benefit no one; but rank, fortune, health, high spirits, laid out in the service of sin, are scorpion-eggs, and fostered and fully grown, the forthcoming furies will seize on the conscience, and with stings of fire will torment it evermore. (*James Hamilton, D.D.*) *Money all gone*:—It takes a great deal longer to make money than to spend it. Although it is only a little while since this young man got one-third of his father's property, it is all gone—every cent of it. So you have known men toiling for twenty, thirty, forty years in commercial or mechanical life, have acquired large property, to lie down and die, leaving a great estate; and in five years the boys have got all through with it. So this young man of the text and his money was soon parted. I do not know just how it went, but there, in the first place, were his travelling expenses. A man who had been brought up as luxuriantly as he evidently was, from the surroundings of that home, could not lodge just anywhere, nor be contented with plain fare. He had been used to see things on a large scale, and I do not suppose he closely calculated the expense. I do not suppose he always stopped to take change. I suppose that sometimes he bought things without any regard to what they cost. Then, besides that, there came in the bill for his personal apparel, and a young man who had a third of his father's property in his pocket could not afford to go shabbily dressed, and so he must have clothes of the best pattern and of the finest material. Besides that, the young man of the text had to meet the bill for social entertainment. He must treat, and it must be with the costliest wines and the rarest viands. Besides that, the sharpers found out that this young man had plenty of money, and they volunteered their services. They will show him the sights. They can tell him things he never imagined away off on that father's homestead. Well, they undertook to show

this man the sights, and after a while he wakes up one day and he says, "I think I will count my money." And he counted his money. It was half gone; but as his habits were thoroughly fastened upon him he could not stop. After awhile he counted his money again, and it was three-fourths gone; but he was on the down grade, going swifter and swifter and swifter, until, when he comes to look for his money, it is all gone. Now, these associates, who stuck to him as long as he had plenty of money, are gone. Morning-glories bloom when the sun is coming up, not when the sun is going down. There is no money with which to meet his expenses. Besides that, the crops have failed, and there is famine in the land, and at a time when affluent men are straitened about getting their daily bread, what is to become of this poor fellow, with an empty pocket and a discouraged heart? "Oh!" you say, "let him work." He cannot work. His hands, soft and tender, would be dreadfully blistered with toil. Perhaps he comes then to some place where he can get occupation, he thinks, appropriate for an educated young man. He comes to a commercial establishment and asks for work. "No," says the head man of the business firm, "we can't have you. Why, you are nothing but a tramp of the street." Perhaps he comes to the office of some official of the government, and seeks employment by which he can support himself. "No," says that officer, "a man clad as you are cannot find any employment in my office." What is he to do? In a strange land. Money all gone. No friends. Ragged. Wretched. Undone. My text with one stroke gives the awful full-length photograph: "He began to be in want." Now, what does all that mean? It means you and me. Our race had a good starting; but we all went away from God, our home, and we have found sin to be an expensive luxury. It despoiled us. It hungered us. It robbed us. It made us hopeless and godless. We had a fine spiritual fortune to start with, and we spent it, and we "began to be in want." I care not how fine our worldly estate may be, or how much bank stock we may possess, or how elegant our social position, sin has pauperized the whole race, and until we go back to God, our home, we are in an awful state of beggary and want. There is no exception to it. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *The beginning of starvation:*—There is something very ominous in that expression, "He began to be in want." It was only a beginning of want, but it was the pre-sage of starvation, and brought along with it the forecast of an agonizing death. Let me ask you to put side by side this expression and another, in which the same word occurs just at the end of the parable—"They began to be merry." Surely both the parallelism and the contrast are alike instructive. Want begins when we wander into the far country, and joy begins when we find ourselves restored to the Father's house; but the want is only the beginning of want, and the joy is only the beginning of joy. The want must go on, becoming more and more cruel and tormenting as the mighty famine increases, while the "merriment," the spiritual mirth of that "happy day" which fixes our choice upon our Saviour and our God, develops into the quiet and calm but deeper and fuller happiness of a life in which the soul feeds on Christ, rejoices in the Lord, and joys in the God of his salvation. Indeed, do not these contrasted sentences suggest to our minds the thought that heaven and hell have their commencements here on earth, to whatever each may develop hereafter? For heaven is that condition of existence that is induced by the satisfying of the soul in God. As yet our heaven is incomplete, for the satisfaction is not yet full. Only when we wake up in God's likeness shall we be satisfied fully; but even here we are possessed of the secret of satisfaction, and when the sense of want arises we know where to turn to find what our spirits need. And while our joy in this satisfaction comes very far short now of what it will be, yet is it in kind, though not in degree, identical with the very joy of heaven. We have begun to be merry. The chief cause of the joy is the same, whether it be felt in heaven or on earth; its source is the same, and its character is the same. It is the very joy of God in the heart of man. And hell has its commencement here on earth in the restlessness and inanity of the godless life, and in the weariness and dissatisfaction of the godless heart. As fleeting pleasures and visionary acquisitions pass away, as one broken cistern after another falls to pieces, as sorrow casts its shadow on the home, as failure embitters our experience or success disappoints us, the want increases; and the pain and sorrow of that want are the same in kind, though not in degree, as that which falls to the lot of the lost under the sentence of doom; for hell is a want that cannot be satisfied, and a loss that cannot be repaired. (*W. M. Hay Atkin, M.A.*) *In want:*—I have seen, sitting shoeless and shirtless on a cab, "joining himself to" the driver, if haply he might get anything out of him, a young man who had inherited a large fortune, who had been in

the same classes with me at school, and had sat as a student for the ministry on the same benches with me at college. I have visited in yonder prison, where he was under sentence of six months' imprisonment for stealing a watch, which he had pawned for drink, a man who was an M.A. of a Scottish University, and who had been Principal of a college in a foreign land. I have had, as a beggar at my door, a man of my own age, brought up in the same street with me, who had squandered a large patrimony in such courses as I have described; and as I saw the grey hair of his premature old age streaming in the wind, and heard him call me by the old familiar name of my boyhood, as he besought me for assistance, I could not but think of these words, "And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in the land, and he began to be in want." (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*)

Feeding swine.—In the days of the Regency there was a man much envied, and in the ranks of fashion his influence was paramount. It was not that he was a statesman or a hero, a thinker or a speaker; but, as far as an outsider can make it, he was a gentleman. His bow, his gait, his dress, were perfection: the Regent took lessons at his toilette; when peeresses brought out their daughters they awaited with anxiety his verdict, and no party was distinguished from which he withheld his presence. Very poor padding within, heartless and soulless, the usual sawdust which goes for a dandy, by infinite painstaking and equal impudence he scrambled into his much envied ascendancy, the arbiter of taste, the director of the drawing-room, the leader of the great army of beaux and butterflies. Then came a cloud. The prince withdrew his favour, and, of course, the prince's friends. His mysterious wealth suddenly took wing, and means which he took to recover it sent him into life-long exile at Calais and Caen. He had no God. His God was the sunshine—court-favour, the smiles of the great and the gay. The instant these were withdrawn the poor Apollo butterfly came fluttering down, down into the dust, and never soared again. It was all in vain that old acquaintances tried to keep him out of debt and discredit. With no gratitude, and with little conscience, and with only that amount of pride which makes the misanthrope, he begged and borrowed on all sides, at the *table d'hôte* glad to get a bottle of wine from some casual tourist by telling stories of old times, and unable to cross the threshold when his only suit of clothes was in process of repair. The broken-down exquisite began to be in want, and, when borrowing a biscuit from a grocer, or a cup of coffee from a kindly hostess, he may have remembered the days when he lavished thousands on folly, the days when he was the favourite guest at the palace. Truly, it was a mighty famine, but it did not bring him to himself. It only alienated from mankind a heart which had all along been estranged from the living God, and gave frightful force to his cynicism. "Madame de St. Ursain," as he said to his landlady, "were I to see a man and a dog drowning together in the same pond, and no one was looking on, I would prefer saving the dog." And whether it be Richard Savage, whose riotous living at last imbrued his hands in another's blood, and then landing him in the debtor's prison, left him to be buried at the cost of the kind-hearted gaoler; or Emma, Lady Hamilton, passing like a meteor through foreign courts, and making wise men mad with brilliancy and beauty, then cast off by society, and from a sordid lodging carried in a deal box to a nameless grave; or men like Beckford, who, spending prodigious wealth in self-idolatry, have lived to find that the idol was not worth the worship; by cases which it would weary you to quote, we might show how invariably, if there be but time to work out the legitimate sequel, separation from God ends in desolation and sorrow. We might show how often the wayward child, who would not sit contented at the Father's board and eat the children's bread, has ended at the stye, and been fain to clutch at husks which the swine do eat. And from the nature of the case, as well as the Word of God, we might show how inevitably the far country becomes a waste and howling wilderness, and how, soon or late, the soul which there abides must die of hunger. (*James Hamilton, D.D.*)

Husks.—The "husks that the swine did eat" are familiarly known as the pods of the *Ceratonia siliqua* of Linnaeus. It is a noble tree, stretching all along the southern points of the shores of the Mediterranean, and sometimes farther northward, from Spain to Palestine. Greece and Cyprus are the most favoured places, but southern Italy is beautiful with these trees. The foliage is dark green—evergreen; the pod is thick, and filled with a viscous, sweetish substance, from which is obtained a very useful *dibs* or molasses, which is often made to take the place of a similar product from the grape. These pods are to be seen now and then for sale in New York and Philadelphia. The smaller merchants often ridiculously call them "locusts and wild honey," with about as much reason,

and with just the same mistake, as those who call them "St. John's bread." The pod is thickish, and generally breaks up when dry, the pieces still holding the beans; not dropping them out as peas are dropped. The kharûb bean can scarcely be shelled—except when fresh, and then not easily. Not only the beans, but the pods themselves, are an article of food for both beast and man. They are exported to Europe and America, and ground up to serve many purposes of food, and perhaps adulteration. One may look over the newspaper lists of arrivals of vessels at Constantinople, and often see that by far the greater number of vessels were loaded with kharûb beans or pods, and most of them from Limassol in Cyprus. To be sure these vessels are very small, and one large steamer has the capacity of a hundred of them; but in numbers these kharûb cargoes appear to lead the list in Constantinople. The identity of the fruit of the kharûb-tree with these "husks" does not depend upon the Greek alone of the New Testament, but in the Peshitto Syriac rendering, the Syriac and Arabic names of both tree and fruit, and the tradition of the country which has kept the name. In Spain the same Arabic name is still retained, together with the article attached. In Italy the same name exists, though the writer oftener heard it pronounced carrô'ba than carru'ba. In Arabic the accent is on the last syllable. As given in the English dictionaries, its pronunciation has departed about as widely from the original as the information they give has departed from completeness. They lay it down as câr'ob. That, however, is more pardonable than the manner in which most English-speaking Hebraists abandon English coincidences with the true Shemitic pronunciation to adopt the mistakes of Germans, or the substitutes which Germans adopted for letters in cases where they "could not frame to pronounce it right." Linnæus doubtless named the tree *Ceratonia siliqua* in order to combine both the original Greek and the Latin Vulgate translation. The former is *keratiôn* and the latter *siliquis*. With regard to this food as characteristic of the prodigal's present or former condition, no great stress can be laid. Poor people eat it now; in Philadelphia it is sold as a sweatmeat to the little boys. It is not likely that the young man found such fare at his father's table. The talmudic proverb, however, says, "When the Israelite must eat rejected food, then he comes to himself." But they have two other proverbs of great beauty in this connection. The first is: "The doors of prayer are sometimes open, sometimes shut; but the doors of repentance are ever open." The other is: "No sin resists sorrow and penitence." (*Prof. Isaac H. Hall.*)

Pretty near to the husks:—Vice-Chancellor Blake, of Toronto, in an address at the Mildmay Conference, June 21, 1882, said:—A young man came to our city some six or seven years ago, the son of a clergyman. He had been a ne'er-do-weel, and had been sent, as so many are sent, abroad, because you can do nothing with them here. He was taken up by the Association; one of the members took him, and kept him at his house for six months. To-day that young man stands as the head of a principal undertaking in our Dominion. I don't wonder that his mother wrote a letter from Italy, where she was living, to say that if the broad Atlantic did not separate us, she would come to thank us for what our Association had done for her son.

Another instance. A young man went to the Southern States, a distance of two thousand miles from our city, and the secretary of our Association wrote and said, "You will find so-and-so in your city; look him up, and see if anything can be done for him." He was so low down that, although the son of wealthy parents, he was found in one of the fish-markets cleaning fish. "Young man," said the delegate who found him, "you have got pretty near to the husks." "Yes," said he, "I have; it was painted very bright as I entered, but I find it a very dark and miserable place where I have got to." "Do you want to leave it?" "I do." "Are you determined to make a struggle?" "Yes." "Then come to my warehouse, and I will give you a place. I will expect you at my Bible-meeting every afternoon, and you will come and take a seat in my pew at church." "I will," he said. At our great Sunday-school Convention last year in the city, where we had delegates by the hundred, that young man came as one of the delegates sent up from that town in the United States.

Eating the husks:—How often do young men break away from the wholesome restraints of home and of religious society, promising themselves peculiar enjoyment in pursuing their wayward fancies, dreaming of wealth, of fame, or flattering themselves with the delusive idea of a good time in some vague adventure! In the journal of a soldier belonging to the 72nd Regiment of the English army, published at the close of the last general continental war, an instance of this occurs. The writer of the journal had been induced, in hopes of a life of pleasure, to enlist, and to forsake his quiet and respectable home, greatly

to the grief of his parents. A few years afterwards, he was, when serving in the Peninsula, glad to be allowed to eat of the biscuits which he was employed to break for the bounds of the commander-in-chief, at a time when provisions were scarce. "I ate them with tears," he said, "and thought of the prodigal." (*A. C. Thomson, D.D.*)

Vain efforts of the soul to find satisfaction:—The soul of man is a clasping, clinging soul, seeking to something over which it can spread itself, and by means of which it can support itself. And just as in a neglected garden you may see the poor creepers making shift to sustain themselves as best they can; one convolvulus twisting round another, and both dragging on the ground; a clematis leaning on the door, which will by-and-by open and let the whole mass fall down; a vine or a passion-flower wreathing round a prop which all the while chafes and cuts it; so in this fallen world it is mournful to see the efforts which human souls are making to get some sufficient object to lean upon and twine around. (*James Hamilton, D.D.*)

The world's treatment of its votaries in time of need:—The prodigal of whom we are speaking sought the companionship of the world. He courted the pleasures of the world; he lived for the world, and he spent his all upon the world. Is he singular in this? Have you not done the same? I speak not now of the world of business, of commerce and trade; I speak not now of this moving panorama of daily life that surrounds us; I believe even in that respect I might also speak of the unsatisfying nature even of the world of business, but I speak not of that now: I speak of the world of sin—the world, as alluded to in that text, "Love not the world, neither the things of the world; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." The world very cunningly allures you by its pleasures; is that an inducement sufficient to lead you from your Father's home? Then I ask you, I catechise you to-day, What means that aching of the head, and that aching of the heart, and that surfeit and disappointment, which are so generally the accompaniments of those who follow after the so-called pleasures of the world? Do those pleasures satisfy you? Or will they ever compensate you for the loss of a Father's favour and of a Father's countenance? The world calls off the allegiance of many from the King of kings; the world lives on your substance while it lasts, and it sucks out no small advantage from many a prodigal. But then, when you, poor sinner, have spent, or rather misspent, all your golden opportunities, when you have lavished all your hopes of heaven, when you have bartered your heavenly birthright for an earthly mess of pottage, what next? Having cast your precious pearls before swine, be sure they will turn and rend you; and the world that once flattered you is now the first to forsake and forget you. Tell me, is that a reward worth living for? Is that a fate worth leaving your home to purchase? Is that a destiny worth putting yourself to so much trouble to attain? How much better the choice of Moses—"choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season"; or the experience of David—"A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand"—spent in the world and in the things of the world, and in sin and in the pleasures of the world: "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." And oh! prodigal, let it never be said of you, that you have subsided to the lowest level of sin, that you prefer to abide in the tents of wickedness, as did the prodigal. (*R. Maguire, D.D.*)

Unsatisfied desires:—Who will give to the hungry heart of man, whose appetite will not, cannot, be put off with husks, whose desires are so infinite, whose yearning is so unutterable? Where shall we look to satisfy the craving of that spirit made to be filled with all the fulness of God? Who will give to him? Shall we appeal to the gaudy, painted world, with its brief pageant, its short-lived joys, its aimless tumult and hubbub? What has Fashion to give her votaries and her victims? A delirious dream, a momentary intoxication, a giddy whirl of social and animal excitement, and then the bitterness and the heartache as this unsubstantial feast of Tantalus passes from us, and leaves us as empty as ever. But the heart wants something more than a masquerade, something more than toys and gewgaws, with which for a little season grown-up children may disport themselves—something more than the sights and sounds that please the eye and ear for the moment, only to leave the real man still displeased, as he asks impatiently, "Is this all? Is this all?" And still the dismal record remains, "And no man gave unto him." To whom shall we appeal? Can Mammon do nothing for us? Surely never was deity served with greater devotion by his devotees than day by day is lavished on him. Will he do nothing for our spiritual hunger? Ah, my brethren, the value of money is what it will fetch, and if it won't fetch us true satisfaction, or peace, or hope, or moral dignity, what the richer are we? Can the

human spirit digest gold, or assimilate it to its mysterious substance? The rich fool in the parable seemed to indulge some such delusion, but he only proved his folly by doing so. So little can Mammon do for our real happiness, that we are in the habit of distinguishing the most devoted of his worshippers, the very high priests of his shrine, with the title of "misers," implying that they are of all men the most miserable. The indignant heart declines this mockery of its desire, and still the mournful sentence remains true, "And no man gave unto him." Where shall we look? Shall we fall back upon the charms of literature and art, and satiate our senses in the hope of ministering to our spirits? Here we meet with some encouragement from some of our modern teachers, who will have us believe in no heaven save a picture-gallery or a concert-room, and in no Deity save high art. And some would have us think that Nature is our true foster-mother, and that the satisfaction denied elsewhere is to be found in prying into her secrets and examining her hidden mysteries. These are noble dreamers, these hierophants of art and science; and perhaps they come the nearest of answering our demands. Yet even here we only find disappointment. The wise man was right when he said, "All things are full of weariness; man cannot utter it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing." These things please us most in early days, when first with youthful enthusiasm we begin to worship the beautiful or to investigate the curious; but there is something in man more divine than taste and more profound than curiosity, and this higher element in man neither art nor science can reach. "I don't know how it is," said a distinguished art critic, a man of the highest culture and refinement, and one who had possessed for the greater part of his life every facility for æsthetic enjoyment in his circumstances and training—"I don't know how it is, but now, in middle life, art no longer affects me as it once did. There was once a keen joy that I would be conscious of in perusing a beautiful poem, or in looking at a really good picture, which I can't get up now, however much I may try. I can't work myself by any effort of my will into anything at all like the enthusiasm that once seemed quite spontaneous. I can't say I get much enjoyment out of art now; it's more a business than a pleasure." Still even in these higher regions, visited only by the few, and where we might expect that the mighty famine would be less keenly felt, it remains true, "And no man gave unto him." (*W. M. Hay Aitken, M.A.*)

When he came to himself.—*The prodigal repenting*.—I. THE PRODIGAL COMES TO HIMSELF. He had, as it were, been all abroad; he had not been really at home in any sense; he had not been looking at himself, nor studying himself, nor thinking of his real condition and his real want. Those interests which were really his highest, and which he should have felt to be his highest, he had never for a moment set his thoughts upon. All that he should have cared about he was quite careless of; unobservant, ignorant of that which was really his good. We speak of a man being out of his mind; we speak of a man coming again into his right mind; and these familiar expressions of ours may very well serve to help us to see something of the depth of meaning here—"He came to himself." The mind which, as it were, should have been at home, roams abroad. So it was with this man: his mind, first in wild enjoyment, and then in despairing expedient; himself first clad in all sorts of gaiety and gaudy robes, and then clad again in rags; at one time in the haunts of sensual pleasure, at another time in the gloomy caves of woe: now intoxicated with the very delights on which his soul was set, now again obstinate and morose. The mind of his at last came home—"He came to himself"; and then it was, when he came to himself, that the great reality broke upon him, and he saw what was the truth at the time, and what had been the truth before. Then his real condition was apparent to him, and all his sadness stood up before him, firm, and stark, and stern, so as to terrify him. And then he could not but contrast the state of things in which he was, and the condition of things which he well knew existed at home—"How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare!" II. THE PRODIGAL RESOLVES. Of all the ways in which he had hitherto gone, he now finds that none is the right way, particularly that way of all others which he first chose for himself, the way which led him from his father's home, the first way in which he ever put his feet. But now he sees that there is only one certain way of peace and hope; that there is no way like this—the way that brings him back to his father. Therefore he determines to go and to confess the whole—to make a clean breast of the whole—to cast himself upon his father's mercy, to be taken back upon his father's terms, and upon no terms of his own—"Make me as one of thy hired servants": give me even the very lowest place at thy feet; only receive me home. It is impossible, I think, to agree with

the opinion of some, that in this expression, "Make me as one of thy hired servants," there is a lurking pride. Some suppose that in this expression he purposes to work out his restoration. It is quite clear, however, that this explanation is quite contrary to the spirit of the gospel, and therefore cannot satisfy the words of the parable. The force of the passage is not in the words, "Make me as one of thy hired servants"; that is only thrown in to heighten the effect. The force of the petition lies in the words. "I am no more worthy to be called thy son." Only take me home; only let me find my place near thee, in thy service, and I am content to have any terms whatever, even though I be "as one of thy hired servants." And it is even thus that the Spirit of God leads an awakened sinner to his Father's home on high; it is even thus that He pursues His work, when, having convinced the man of sin, He goes on to convince him of righteousness. The sinner is brought to the first real state of true awakening of heart and conscience; the sinner is made to see what he is; he comes to himself; and then, by the gracious teaching of the Spirit of God, there pass over him similar feelings to those which filled this younger son's mind, and then he says, "I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, I have sinned against heaven, and before Thee"; and so he feels that there is no need now for him to abide where he is. There may be, indeed, fears; there may be doubts; again and again these will arise; but there is an ever-urging impulse of the Spirit of all grace upon his conscience and upon his heart to take up the words so often, but, alas! so vainly repeated by hundreds of us—"I will arise, and go to my Father." III. There is yet a third stage—THE STAGE OF ACTION. It is of the first consequence that action should follow resolution. In any case, if a man makes a resolution that is worth anything, the sooner he puts it into action the better; and, of all the characteristics which call out admiration, this is above all others—decision; and the man who knows not only how to decide, but how to act upon his decision, is the man whom others most approve; that is the man to deserve our confidence, and the man to get it. And therefore the Lord draws a perfect picture, not simply of an awakened man, but of a man that feels pressure; not only of a man who resolves that something must be done to relieve this pressure, but one who gets up and does it; a man who acts; a man who knows how to do that which he has resolved to do—"He arose and came to his father." Yes, there was hope for him. He felt that of all places where he was likely to find peace, his father's heart and his father's bosom was the place where he would find most. (C. D. Marston, M.A.) *The prodigal's conversion*.—I. THE CAUSES OF THE PRODIGAL'S CONVERSION. First, affliction, bodily and mental. He suffered from hunger, from hard treatment, from base ingratitude of former companions, and from a deep consciousness of his most degraded condition. How naturally true is all this. How it perfectly accords with the experience of all without exception who sell themselves to the world! We do not say, that many profligate and worldly-minded men do not for a season prosper in their career. No, on the contrary, for a season their path lies undisturbed by any piercing sorrow or harrowing disappointment; but, notwithstanding this, a time does really come when the most reckless and the most indifferent feel the bitterness of the vanity they have courted, and taste with loathing the dregs of an existence they have worn out, wasted, and exhausted in the service of "the prince of darkness." Secondly, a return to reason, and to a consciousness of his real state and condition, was another cause in operation with the prodigal. "When he came to himself," it is said; so that before this time he was not himself. He was the slave of others, the slave of his own passions and pursuits, and thus he was not himself in the freedom of one who is impelled and influenced by the best and noblest feelings and faculties of our human nature. He was like one in a dream, apparently acting as a sane and wakeful man, but in reality not so. Or he might be justly considered as acting the part of a maniac—that part specially which throws up health, life, home, and all the dearest bonds of enlightened intelligence and parental fondness, for a passing shadow, for a bubble glittering momentarily on the very stream which breaks it, for false hopes which rise only to bewilder, mislead, and destroy, and, in short, for a small section of time at the cost of a bright immortality. Thirdly, another cause is found in the exercise and influence of memory. The poor prodigal goes back in thought to the home of his father. He said, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare." He remembers the days long past, when he was surrounded with every comfort, and when every association of his earlier days was hallowed by a father's love and a father's care. What a contrast does his present miserable state offer to that of a former period! Well, and it is still by the power

of memory that men turn their thoughts and affections towards God. II. **THE RESULTS.** 1. Here we discover, in the first place, decision of purpose. The young man does not halt or waver in his opinions. He is fully alive to the folly and sin of his former course of life, and now he is determined upon a change. And observe, this decision is absolutely necessary in the case of all who would become members of the household of Christ. There must be a steady and fixed determination to withstand every inducement to return, and to pursue the object set before the mind through every difficulty. The journey may be long and dreary; its pathways may be rugged and steep, full of pressing dangers on the right hand and on the left. Storms may await you in your passage, and many a lurking foe may dodge your footsteps on their weary march; but the purpose to return to God must remain unchanged; firm as the mountain-summit, which still points heavenwards, whether the sunlight robes it in reflected grandeur, or whether the thunder-cloud clothes it with darkness, and the lightning scorches it with flame. 2. We observe another result in deep contrition of heart. The review of a past dissolute and thoughtless career produces in the awakening mind a humiliating sense of wrong and insult offered to the kind and tender father of an ungrateful child. And who so kind, and merciful, and loving as the Father of heaven and earth? And who so ungrateful and rebellious as the children of men? These are great truths recognized, acknowledged, and felt with the deepest humility by every sincere and honest-hearted disciple of the Saviour. (*W. D. Horwood.*) *The madness of sinners*.—It is related in the life of Colonel Gardiner, that, after his remarkable conversion from a course of irreligion and debauchery to the fear and love of God, and a conduct agreeable to the gospel, it was reported among his gay companions that he was stark mad, a report at which none who know the wisdom of the world in these matters will be surprised. He therefore took the first opportunity of meeting a number of them together; and after having defended a righteous, sober, and godly life, and challenged them to prove that a life of irreligion and sensuality was preferable to it, one of the company cut short the debate, and said, "Come, let us call another cause: we thought this man mad, and he is in good earnest proving that we are so." Perhaps there are few among the irreligious and licentious part of mankind who would make so frank a confession; yet if we take our notions of things from the dictates of unprejudiced reason and the Word of God, we shall be sensible that this sentiment is true, that religious men are the only persons in their right minds, and that all the rest are in a state of miserable distraction. I. EVERY UNCONVERTED SINNER IS A MADMAN, OR BESIDE HIMSELF. 1. He does not use his understanding as he ought. 2. Further, he acts contrary to the nature of things, his own professed judgment and true interest (Eccl. ix. 3). "Madness in general," as one observes, "means such an extravagant deviation from the common apprehensions and actions of men, as discovers either the want or total disorder of some of the principal faculties which men daily exercise in common life. Now vice is the same deviation from the established constitution of nature, and the same violation of its laws, as madness is of the ordinary practice of mankind." As in a natural lunacy, there are oftentimes intervals in which the unhappy creature is himself, and seems for a time well, so it is in this moral disorder. Sinners are sometimes under strong convictions of the misery of their state; are sensible of the necessity and excellency of true religion, and accuse and condemn themselves for neglecting it; and for a while they act rationally, but soon return to folly. The distraction appears again; they grow worse than before, and forget their wise acknowledgments and good resolutions. 3. He is averse to the proper methods of cure. In many cases of lunacy persons will speak and act rationally except upon one particular subject. So it is here. Though with regard to the concerns of this world and his temporal interest he may act wisely and rationally, yet to that which is "the one thing needful," "the whole of man," and the main concern of an immortal being, he pays little attention. But there is this difference, and it shows the prodigious folly and madness of sinners, that their distraction is voluntary; they bring it upon themselves; they choose it, and love to have it so. Such is the deceitfulness of sin, that when once a man hath devoted himself to it, he generally persists in it against the clearest dictates of conscience, and will call it happiness, though he feels it to be misery, whereas a natural madness is a calamity, not a crime, and the unhappy persons who are affected with it deserve our tenderest sympathy. I observe—II. WHEN A SINNER REPENTS AND RETURNS UNTO GOD HE COMES TO HIMSELF. So the prodigal in the text. His necessities brought him to himself. He thought and considered, resolved and

returned to his father. And his father received him "safe and sound," as it is expressed (ver. 27). (*J. Orton.*) *The resolution:—I.* In the first place, we have brought before us **THE TRUE CONDITION OF THE SINNER SO LONG AS HE IS AWAY FROM GOD.** "When he came to himself": that implies that in some very real sense he had not been perfectly himself. Generally, commentators have supposed that the reference here is to insanity, and they tell us, with perfect truth, that the sinner is in some respects like a madman. He follows delusions as if they were realities, and he treats realities as if they were delusions. His moral nature is perverted, just as the lunatic's intellect is beclouded; and, in regard to duty, he makes mistakes similar to those which the maniac makes in ordinary matters. So he may well be styled mad; but there is this solemn difference between him and the ordinary lunatic, that while insanity cancels responsibility, the sinner is not only blameworthy for his moral perversity, but his responsibility continues in spite of it. Although, however, there are thus many interesting and striking points of resemblance between the condition of the maniac and that of the sinner, I am not sure that the "coming to himself," in the verse before me, suggests the being "beside himself," as the condition out of which he came. Equally it may imply that he was "beneath himself," or that there was in him a certain unconsciousness, out of which he required to be roused before he could be thoroughly himself. When, for example, one has fainted away and recovers, we say that "he has come to himself again," implying that his consciousness has returned. Now, in my view, this is the preferable way of looking at the analogy of my text. The moral nature of this poor youth was virtually dead. His conscience had become seared, so that he was, in a manner, unconscious that there was such a faculty within him. It was there, but it was asleep. It was there, but it was so precisely as the intellectual nature is in a man when he is in a faint: it was inoperative, it was not consciously possessed by him. At length, however, roused by a sense of his degradation, it awoke, and then he came to himself. Very much in the same way the sinner's higher nature is dormant in him. **II.** But we have here, secondly, **THE CHANGE OF THIS CONDITION—"he came to himself."** A new light broke upon this youth in the midst of his darkness. He saw things as he had never before perceived them. Not till now did he discover the guilt and issue of the course which he had been pursuing; and never in his past experience had his father's house seemed to him so precious. For the first time since he left his home, he awoke from "the dream his life-long fever gave him," and things as they were stood unveiled before him. Now, so it is with the sinner. His conversion, too, is an awakening. New thoughts stir within his soul; new feelings vibrate in his bosom. He begins to see what before had been to him almost like a landscape to a man born blind. It is not that new things are called into existence outside of him, for all things are there as they were before. It is rather that his eyes have been opened to see them, and the wonder of his whole subsequent life is that he never saw them till then. He perceives now the danger in which he stands, and recognizing the ability and willingness of God to help him, he cries, like Peter, sinking in the waters, "Lord, save me; I perish." **III.** But it is time now that we should consider **THE PRODIGAL'S REFLECTIONS ON COMING TO HIMSELF.** They were twofold—having regard, first, to himself, and, second, to his father's house. In reference to himself, he said, "I perish with hunger." Now, as I said in the outset, there was distinct progress here. Never before had this youth allowed himself to think that death by starvation was to be the issue if he remained in the far land, but so soon as that shaped itself to him clearly, he took his resolution to arise. It is the same with men and their return to God. I believe that if we could narrow down the choice of the sinner to one or other of these two alternatives—everlasting destruction, as the consequence of guilt, or eternal salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ—we should have no difficulty in impelling him to decide in the right direction; but because he persists in believing that there is some loophole left him through which he may escape, even if he should not accept salvation through Christ, he continues indifferent to the statements of the gospel. Awake, O sinner! to the danger in which you stand. If you continue as you are, there is nothing but destruction before you. But the prodigal's reflections had reference also to his father's house. He said, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare!" Bread!—once he thought of greatness and wealth, now, however, he will be content with bread—yea, if he could only have what many a time he had seen his father's servants lay aside as not required by them, he would be content. There was enough at home, if he were only there.

Now, similarly, the sinner, in conversion, comes to the persuasion that there is plenty for him in God. If you ask how this is brought about in him, I answer, by his belief of the statements of the gospel, for it is here that we must bring in the doctrine of the Cross. IV. I dare not conclude without noticing, however briefly, THE RESOLUTION TO WHICH THOSE REFLECTIONS LED. "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants." This youth determined, there and then, to go back to his home, not, however, in a dogged, sullen spirit, but in a thoroughly penitent disposition. He blames no one but himself; he resolves to make a full and frank acknowledgment of his folly; and now, instead of claiming anything as a rightful portion, he is willing to be treated as a servant. Now, taking this as representing the sinner's repentance, one or two things need to be noted, as suggested by it. In the first place, there is an unreserved confession of sin: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee." He does not soften matters, and speak of his "faults" or his "failings." He does not say, in a self-extenuating way, "I have been a little wild"; but he puts the plain truth forth in all its hideousness, "I have sinned!" Neither, again, does he cast the blame on others. His language is, "I have sinned; the guilt is mine. I have no wish to evade it, or explain it away. I am ashamed of myself." Yet, once more, the enormity of his wickedness before heaven is that which most distresses him. He had brought many evils on himself. He had inflicted great injuries upon others; but that which most burdens him now is that he has sinned against God—the Father who has done so much for him, and has even, after all and above all, sent His Son into the world to make atonement for his guilt. This is painful to him in the extreme, and he can do nothing but weep over it, but his tears, in the estimation of God, are of more value than the glittering diamond, for they tell Him that He has found at last His long-lost child. This is true penitence. This is the contrite heart which the Lord will not despise. But, looking again at the resolution before us, we find in it a determination to personal exertion—"I will arise!" The prodigal did not wait till some one else should come and lift him and carry him to his home. Finally, here, this resolution was promptly acted upon—"He arose and went to his father." Just as he was, all tattered and filthy, he went back. He did not say, looking at his garments the while, "I cannot go this way; I must wash myself, and change my raiment, and then set out." Had he mused in that fashion, he would probably never have returned; but he went as he was. So, in conversion, the sinner gives himself back to God just as he is. He does not seek to make himself better. He delays not to work out for himself a robe of righteousness. He waits not even for deeper feelings, or for more intense conviction. He puts himself into God's hands, sure that, for Christ's sake, He will make him all that he should be. "Such as I am," he says, "take me and make me such as Thou wouldst have me to be." (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *The madness of sin*:—"He came to himself." This implies his former mad and insane state. The sinner's condition is one of madness. I. MADNESS IS THE DERANGEMENT OF THE INTELLECTUAL POWERS. II. IN MADNESS PASSION RULES INSTEAD OF REASON. III. MADNESS IS CONNECTED WITH STRANGE DELUSIONS. IV. MADNESS WILL BE PROVED BY THE OBJECTS OF CHOICE AND REJECTION. A sane person prefers good to evil, safety to danger, &c. A madman has no just idea of things. He trifles with peril, sports with danger, rejects the good, and chooses the evil. V. MADNESS WILL BE MANIFEST FROM THE CONVERSATION. It is either violent, incoherent, or insipid. VI. MADMEN ARE UNINFLUENCED BY COUNSEL. How true of sinners! Parents have counselled—"My son, if thy heart," &c. Friends have counselled—"Come thou with us," &c. Ministers have counselled; the Holy Spirit has counselled, &c. Yet sinners will not hear. VII. MADMEN THINK ALL OTHERS MAD, SAVE THEMSELVES. Mad infidel, says all believers are mad; mad drunkard, thinks the sober are mad, &c. Worldling thinks the heavenly-minded Christian is mad. Festus, Paul. Even of Jesus they said, "He has a devil, and is mad." VIII. MADMEN ARE DANGEROUS TO OTHERS. IX. MADNESS IS OFTEN FATAL IN ITS RESULTS. Application: 1. Spiritual madness is self-procured, therefore wilful and altogether inexcusable. 2. Spiritual madness tends to the death of the soul. Eternal woe. 3. For spiritual madness there is one grand efficient remedy, and one only, the glorious gospel of the blessed God, salvation by faith in the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. 4. The application of this remedy invariably brings sinners to a right state of mind. (*J. Burns, D.D.*)

Sin as insanity.—It is said of the lost son that after he had sunk into the lowest depths of misery and wretchedness "he came to himself." These words tell us of the madness of sin. I am sure it is not without reason that we dwell upon the thought. I. And, in doing so, I am not forgetting the objection, not altogether an unreasonable one, THAT IT IS OFTEN DANGEROUS TO LINGER OVER EVIL AND THE THOUGHT OF EVIL. There are morbid, diseased, scrupulous consciences, we may be told, which will never be rendered healthy by brooding over sin; and, besides, it is better for us to be gazing up into the clear blue sky of God's holiness and love than to be bending over the foul, seething, poisonous cesspool of sin. And yet, on the other hand, we shall never escape from the power of sin until we obtain true views of it. And then, with regard to the other suggestion, it is indeed far better, in all ways, that men should raise up their heads into the pure atmosphere of God's presence, and gaze upon the light of His holiness, rather than hang over the fumes of evil and corruption; but, alas! men do hang over these, do keep looking down into the fermenting, putrefying mass of evil without knowing its true character, and are continually inhaling its noxious, deadly vapours. It is only when they are thoroughly convinced of their pestilential character that they will withdraw from their influence and seek to breathe a purer atmosphere. II. Now, let us ask this question seriously: ARE WE ALL OF US, OR EVEN MANY OF US, DEEPLY, SOLEMNLY IMPRESSED WITH THE FEARFUL, DESTRUCTIVE, DEADLY CHARACTER OF SIN? In order to answer the question, let us for one moment glance at those general features of moral evil which have already been brought before us in this parable, and then ask what evidence is found among us of that hatred and loathing of sin which its real character should produce. III. SIN IS MADNESS, FROM WHATEVER POINT OF VIEW WE REGARD THE SUBJECT. There are different phases of insanity. There is raving madness, there is melancholy madness, there is the insanity of mental imbecility, there is monomania, the madness which is excited by one particular subject, whilst on all other points the mind is calm and rational. The mere mention of these forms of insanity will bring to your recollection corresponding forms of sin. You will think of the raving madness of unrestrained anger and violence of temper, or the frenzy of the drunkard; you will think of the solitary brooding over secret sin; of the foolish, irrational, inexplicable sins into which men allow themselves to be led; of the one besetting sin which oftentimes mars a character which were otherwise of exceptional and surprising excellence. Or, again, let us ask what are the signs by which we satisfy ourselves that the mind has lost its balance, and we shall find that these have their antitypes in the lives of sinful men. We say, for example, that a man is insane when he has a weakened or perverted judgment, so weakened and perverted that he is unable to discern between truth and falsehood, between right and wrong. Another sign of insanity is found in the subjection of the will to uncontrollable impulses—when its free action is so impaired that a sudden gust of passion, of anger, or of fear, or of any other passion, carries the whole man before it as a feather is carried by a blast of wind. Or, again, among the signs of insanity we reckon a liability to illusions respecting one's own condition and circumstances, or regarding those by whom we are surrounded. Once more, not to draw out the subject too tediously, we say that a man is mad when, in the conduct of his life or in the management of his affairs, he neglects the known and ordinary principles of human action. Every one of these signs is to be found among those who are subject to the dominion of sin; not every one in all of them, but one sign in one and another in another, just as it is among those who are the victims of insanity. IV. If any think that the language of exaggeration has been employed, or if any would desire to see still more clearly the true character of sin, I will ask them to CONSIDER THE REMEDY WHICH GOD IN HIS WISDOM AND LOVE PROVIDED FOR THE DELIVERANCE OF MANKIND. It was nothing less than the incarnation and sacrifice of the eternal Son of God. God spared not His own Son, but gave Him up freely for us all. How sore, then, must have been man's need, how terrible his malady, when no less remedy was thought sufficient by our Father in heaven! Let those who think lightly of sin, of its true character and of its effects, turn their eyes to Calvary, contemplate the Son of God agonizing and dying, and then let them consider the explanation of that which He endures: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." I think, my brethren, that no one who duly considers what is involved in words like these will ever think or speak lightly on the subject of sin. V. And here it is my duty, as it is my privilege, to offer AN EARNEST REMONSTRANCE WITH THOSE—AND

THEY ARE NOT A FEW—WHO SEEM TO THINK BUT LITTLE OF THAT AWFUL MALADY WITH WHICH ALL MEN ARE MORE OR LESS AFFLICTED, AND UNDER WHICH MANY ARE NOW SUFFERING AND DYING. And let me remind you that there is no real cure for the madness of sin, there is no true remedy for this monster evil but that which sows in our hearts the seeds of holiness, as well as sheds upon our conscience the sense of pardon. The mere repression of evil, even if it were by itself possible, would be altogether insufficient. It is not enough to "cease to do evil"; we must "learn to do well." We must not only forsake the service of the world and the devil; we must become the servants of God and of Christ. (*W. R. Clark, M.A.*)

Coming to himself:—History tells us that during the reign of Queen Elizabeth the Spaniards once unjustly imprisoned some English subjects. No reasoning or expostulation could induce the Spanish authorities to release them; when our queen, finding all other means had failed, lost all patience, and sent a peremptory message declaring that if the imprisoned English were not immediately liberated her fleets and armies should know the reason why. The threat accomplished more than all the previous remonstrances, for at the mention of "fleets and armies" the captives were immediately released. It is often found that one stroke of the rod will bring men to their senses sooner than all the reasoning which can be urged. They can afford to be stubborn and perverse so long as their persons are secure; but the first smart of a reversed fortune will make them yield to all your arguments. So it was with the prodigal. By the swine troughs he came to himself. I. THE PRODIGAL'S MADNESS. Strange as it may seem to some, it may be proved to a demonstration that every unsaved sinner under heaven is a madman!

If you saw a river bursting its banks, and while the flood rushes over meadow and lawn, bearing everything before its fury, also saw a man, who, perceiving its approach, begins to clap his hands and laughs in high glee, making no effort to escape from the impending destruction, would you not deem that man mad? If you saw a snake coiling round the body of a man, and although he well knows that it will crush him in a short time, strokes the glittering thing, and, absorbed in admiring its speckled scales, makes no effort to extricate himself, would you not think him mad? If you saw a beggar sitting on a dunghill, with rags covering his body, some broken pottery on his head, and a thorn-stick in his hand, and shouting to all who passed that he is a king, his rags imperial purple, the broken pottery his diadem, and the thorn-stick his sceptre, would you not also deem him mad? Or if you saw men seeking with all the ardour of their nature certain ends by such means as in the nature of things could not possibly ensure success, or wasting their time on the most trivial matters, while their most important concerns are unattended to, would you not deem these men beside themselves? And how do sinners act? In common with all mankind they want peace and safety, and they seek them in the things that are passing away. They want an abiding refuge, and they take shelter in a world that every day is drawing nearer to its doom. II. THE PRODIGAL RETURNING TO HIS SENSES. "He came to himself." He went away that he might find himself; but the farther he went from home the farther he went from himself. Self was only found when he resolved on finding his father. 1. The first evidence of the prodigal's returning to his senses is his stopping calmly to consider. The great want of sinners is reflection. But blinded by drink, or lust, or avarice, or deceived by pride or imaginary goodness, they heed not the cry of the charmer, charm he never so wisely. In their devotion to the pursuit of their glittering baubles they are deaf to the solicitations of wisdom; they will not consider. Reflection is the window which lets the light of truth in upon the soul, that its real wants may be discovered; is the friendly hand that plucks the child from danger when the house is on fire; is the voice of wisdom that checks the power of passion, and points to the path of peace. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways." There is hope of a man as soon as he begins to consider. 2.

Another evidence of the prodigal's returning to his senses is, his forming a right resolution. "I will arise, and go to my father." (*W. G. Pascoe.*)

A mind's transition:—So rooted is the heart's enmity to God, that man must often be driven, as by the blast of a tempest, to submission and to duty. The prodigal must suffer beneath want, and shame, and abandonment before he thinks on his ways, and turns longingly to the house of his Father. How often is it that the consequences of crime—the disease, the misery, the remorsefulness which wait upon the track of sin, though in themselves sequences of a purely natural law, are used of God as means to impression and salvation! You must not suppose that the mind of the prodigal came at once, in sudden revulsion, from heedlessness to

serious thought, and from obduracy to tender and softened feeling. There would be, in all probability, in accordance with the laws of mental working, several preliminary stages. The earliest feelings would still partake of the character of resistance and rebellion. An awakened conscience, that is not pacified, only exasperates into more audacious rebellion. Many a man, whom shame has only maddened into more frantic resistance, walks the earth to-day a moral Laocoön, stung in a living martyrdom by the serpents which in his bosom lodge. It is hardly credible how much, not only of human sadness, but of human sin, has sprung from the soul's first passionate recoil against detected criminality, or blasted reputation, or enforced penalty, or stained honour. When remorse scourges, it is not, like Solomon, with whips, but, like Rehoboam, with scorpions; and the intolerable anguish of a wounded spirit has prompted to many a deed of violence, from which, before his passions were hounded into madness by a guilty conscience, the man would have shrunk with loathing and with horror. Oh, when evil passions and an evil conscience seethe in the same caldron, who can imagine or create a deeper hell? The sullen despondency with which the prodigal would strive to reconcile himself to his fate would mingle with oft-repeated curses pronounced upon his adverse destiny, rather than his own folly. But all this was but the swathing grave-cloth out of whose folds the new man was to rise—the gathering of the dark and angry cloud which was soon to be dissolved in showers, and on whose bosom the triumphant sun would paint the iris by and by. That ever-present Spirit who strives with men to bring them to the knowledge of the truth was doubtless all the while at work upon the prodigal's heart; and when He works, out of the brooding storm come the calm and the zephyr of the summer-tide—out of the death of enjoyment the rare blessedness which is the highest good—out of the death-working sorrow of the world the repentance which is unto life eternal. We know not precisely how the change was effected from the hardness of heart, and contempt of God's word and commandment, to the softening of thought and contrition. Perhaps the Divine Spirit, wrought by the power of memory, thawed the ice away from the frosted spirit by sunny pictures of the past—by the vision of the ancestral home—of the guileless childhood—of the father's ceaseless strength of tenderness—of the spell of a living mother's love, or of the holier spell of a dead one. I. A TRANSITION FROM MADNESS TO REASON. All the habits in which the sinner is wont to indulge answer to the habits and delusions of those who have been bereft of reason, or in whom it has been deposed from its rightful government of the man. Madness is rash and inconsiderate action—action without thought of consequences. The madman's hand is sudden in its violence; the madman's tongue shoots out its barbed arrows; he is reckless of the slain reputation, or of the murdered life; and is not like rashness a characteristic of the sinner? Little reck he of his own dishonour, or of the life that he has wasted in excess of riot. He goes heedlessly on, though his every step were up the crater's steep, and mid the crackling ashes. Madness is mistake of the great purposes of life; the employment of the faculties upon objects that are contemptible and unworthy. Hence you see the lunatic intently gazing into vacancy, or spending hours in the eager chase of insects on the wing, or scribbling, in strange medley of the ribald and the sacred, scraps of verse upon the torn-out pages of a Bible. And are there not greater degradations in the pursuits which engross such multitudes of the unconverted? When a sinner comes to himself he blushes for his former frenzy; he feels himself a child of the Divine; he feels himself an heir of the eternal; and, looking with a strange disdain upon the things which formerly trammelled him, he lifts heavenward his flashing eye, and says, "There is my portion and my home." II. There is a transition, again, FROM PRIDE TO SUBMISSION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT. In his former mood of mind he only intensified his own rebellion, and was ready, doubtless, to blame circumstances, or companions, or destiny, or anything rather than his own wickedness and folly. "All things have conspired against me; never, surely, had any one so hard a lot as I. I might not have been exactly prudent now and then, but I have done nothing to merit such punishment as this. I will never confess that I have done wrong; if I were to return to my father, I would not abate a hair's-breadth of my privileges; I would insist—and it is right, for am I not his son?—upon being treated precisely as I was before." So might have thought the prodigal in his pride. But in his penitence no humiliation is too low for him—no concealment nor extenuation is for a moment entertained; with the expectation, not of sonship, but of servitude, and with the frank and sorrowful acknowledgment of sin, he purposes to travel, and to cast himself at the feet of his father. III. A TRANSITION FROM DESPONDENCY TO ACTIVE AND

HOPEFUL ENDEAVOUR. There is not only the mental process, but the corresponding action—the rousing of the soul from its indolent and tormenting despair. This is one main difference between the godly sorrow and that consuming sadness which preys upon the heart of the worldling: the one disinclines, the other prompts to action; the one broods over its own haplessness until it wastes and dies, the other cries piteously for help, and then exults in deliverance and blessing. There was something more than fable in the old mythology which told of Pandora's box—a very receptacle of ills made tolerable only because there was hope at the bottom. In every true contrition there is hope. (*W. M. Punshon, LL.D.*) *Coming to one's self*:—We may interpret this as we use the term familiarly, as where a man is out of his head, out of his mind, and we say when his reason is restored that he has “come to himself” again. Or, when a man comes out of a swoon, he is said to “come to himself,” by which is meant, simply, that he comes to the possession and use of faculties that for a time were clouded, or hindered in their operation. You may also use it in a broader sense; and it is thus that I propose to use it. It may be made to throw much light on the course which men are pursuing at large—even those who do not indulge in passionate excesses, and in the wallow of the appetites. It is proper that we should determine what a man's manhood is; what it is that is *man*, in man. Not everything. There is a difference between men and the animated creation, a part of which they are. And it is not fair to attempt to determine our manhood by the things which we have in common with the ass, with the ox, with the lion, or with the serpent. We must rise higher than the things which are possessed by these creatures, in order to find out what manhood is in man. 1. Looking at it in this light, the first thing that I will mention, as discriminating men from every other part of creation, and as constituting a portion of their true manhood, is their reason—and that in two aspects. (1) First, let us consider it as a governing light and power. I believe the superior animals have the germs or rudiments of reason. There is no question that the dog does, in a very limited way, reason, and that the elephant does, and that the horse does. And that reason in these animals is of the same general kind as the human reason, I do not doubt. But it is very limited, very low, and only occasional. (2) The other view which we are to take of reason, is that by its force we are able to prophecy. That is to say, experience does lay a foundation by which a man may judge from the results of certain causes to-day what will be the results of those causes to-morrow. For instance, if last year, sowing, we derived such and such results, we prophecy that if we sow this year, we shall derive the same results. And this it is which distinguishes between the human and brute reason more significantly than anything else. 2. The next constituent element of a true manhood is moral sense, or a constitution by which the soul recognizes moral obligations, from which, by a comparison of the performance of our life, measured by obligation, we come to understand the qualities of right and wrong; to accept a higher standard of obligation than mere self-will, or than mere self-indulgence and pleasure. There is no evidence that animals ever have a conception of right and wrong. 3. Then we have one more characteristic—a spiritual nature—an endowment of sentiments which inspire the idea of purity, of self-denial, of holy love, of supersensuousness. It is in this higher range of faculties, thus very briefly, compendiously defined, that a man is to look for his manhood. You are a man by as much as you have this particular part developed. You are less than a man just in the proportion in which you recede and shrink from this kind of measuring. Since one's manhood, or his true self, is to be found in his nobler attributes, and in his true spiritual relations, he who leaves these unused, and lives in the lower range of faculties, may be truly said to have forsaken himself. He has gone down out of himself into that which was a supplementary nature, an auxiliary part. He has left that nature of reason, and that nature of moral sense, and that nature of spirituality, which constitute his manhood, and has given himself up to the range of the senses. And that is the way the brute lives. That is the way the brute creation lives. He and they alike live for the gratification of the appetites and the passions. It does not require that a man should become an assassin, or a mighty criminal, before it can be said that he is unnatural. Every man that teaches himself to find the chief employments and enjoyments of his manhood lower than in his reason and moral sentiments and spiritual nature, has forsaken himself. Every man whose business is manual and physical, and who contents himself with that business, and feeds himself by nothing higher than that, is a creature that is spending his life forces lower than the level of true manhood. Take a step higher. Do you live habitually, in your ordinary

affairs, in your social intercourse, in the things that you seek and the things that you avoid, according to the dictates of your moral sense? Are you conscious that you bring to bear upon your conduct the great moral measurements, the rights and the wrongs, that have been determined by the holiest experiences of the best men of the world, and have come down to us in the records of God's Word, as God's best judgments expressed through such experiences through thousands of years? Do you live in accord with them? Are you uniformly generous, uniformly unselfish, uniformly true? Is your life straight? Is your path from day to day a line drawn as true as a rule could draw it? Are you *right-eous*, or are you *unright-eous*? Measure your life by this higher moral sentiment. Is there a man who does not know that his life will not bear any such measurement as that? Every man says, "There is not a faculty that, when it acts, does not act crookedly." Take any single one of your feelings and watch it for a single day, and you will find it to be so. You are living below your true manhood. It is only once in a while that you come to yourself. You do once in a while. When a truly eminent Christian man dies, and the sound of life is for a short time hushed, all your better feelings lay down their warlike feathers, and there rises up in your soul a consciousness, an ideal, of what you ought to be, and how you ought to live, for a single moment, it may be, or a single hour. I have seen men come over from their business in New York, to attend the funeral of a brother—of some eminent Christian—and shed tears in this house. When, for instance, Brother Corning was buried, I saw hard-faced men cry. And I know what we should hear such men say if we could listen to their conversation as they walk away on such occasions. "Dear brother," says one, "we have been working for money; but that is not the main thing. It is only a little while that it can do us any good." "That is true," says another. "We must die soon. It will not be long before there will be just such a funeral for us. And are we ready?" And so these two men, grey-haired, it may be, very simple and very much in earnest, give expression to their feelings as they go down to Fulton Ferry. And as they cross over they say to themselves, "I will think of these things, and try to carry the impression of them with me." But when they go up the street on the other side they meet this man and that man, and their minds are distracted from these serious thoughts; and when they get back into their counting-room they forget all about them. They did think they would tell their wives all about it when they got home at night; but when, at the supper-table, they were asked, "Husband, did you go to the funeral to-day?" they said, "Yes." "Was it a good funeral?" "Very, very." That was all they had to say about it! And yet they had had a revelation. They had come to themselves, though it was but for an hour. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The dawn of better things*:—"He came to himself." He never had come anywhere to so good a purpose. He had come to a far country and gained much knowledge at a very, very dear rate. He had come to strange doings, and seen strange characters, whose face it had been a mercy never to have seen. He has seen the world, and some of its mysteries of iniquity, and paid dearly for it; but now, at length, he comes to himself. He had always been a stranger there, unwilling to converse seriously with his own proud, flattering, deceived heart. Sometimes, in such cases as this, a young man cannot communicate with his friends; letters are intercepted, communication cut off. One of Satan's plans is this, to put a barrier to prevent the prodigal coming to himself. No prisoner was ever so vigilantly watched—none so guarded with high walls, and gates, and bars, and spikes, as the sinner, to keep him from coming to himself. He is worked hard, he is deceived, he is blinded and led astray; he is kept from church; his Sundays are desecrated; his Bible taken away, or left unread; while bad books are laid on his table, and greedily devoured. Every avenue seems blocked up by which the prodigal might come to himself. Come now to himself, let us hear what he thinks and speaks to himself about. "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I here perish with hunger." The first thing that now stands, like a spectre, in the chamber of his dark and troubled mind, is the long-excluded image of his father. "There," thought he, "far, far away, there is my father; his house, once my home, enriched with every comfort; and the servants, hirelings as they are, yet not a want have they that is unsupplied; and his own son, in this place, perishing with hunger!" The recollection comes home fresh and vivid to his mind's eye; he sees them all again. And then, looking round on the sad reality of his dreary desolation, his strength failing from hunger, he is touched and humbled by the contrast—I here, in this wretched country, perish with hunger. There is one

picture of an awakened sinner. God be thanked for this. He is at length come to himself. The dream is broken. "Why," says he—"why should I sit here to starve? I will arise and go to my father." Do you ask me whence came that godly purpose? I answer, from the Friend of publicans and sinners. It was no spontaneous resolution that sprang up of itself, among the better purposes of that young man's nature. No, no. Sinners do not repent and turn to God in that fashion of themselves. Let us give the praise to whom the praise is due. "No man can come to Me, except the Father, which hath sent Me, draw him." The sense of his wretchedness drew him—his dread of perishing—the tender recollections of his father's love, and his well-known mercy—the desire springing up in his heart, and the hope of pardon springing up in his breast—these are the drawings of the Father's grace, and these prevailed to bring his godly purposes to good effect. (*W. B. Mackenzie, M.A.*) *The prodigal's madness*:—He had been under a hallucination. No doubt, if one had charged him with insanity, he would have denied the charge; and if a physician's certificate had been required to prove his soundness of mind, he could easily have got it from one of the "far country" doctors, who possibly had sat at his table while his money lasted, and freely quaffed his mixed wine; but it would not have been so easy for him to get such a certificate from his own father, or his God. And had not his actions been like the actions of a madman? If you saw a man flinging sovereigns in handfuls into the sea, would you not be disposed to look into his eyes to satisfy yourself as to whether or not the ray of reason had altogether fled away from these expressive orbs? Now, had not this youth virtually done so? And do not multitudes, in our own day and land, at race-courses and in taverns, do the same? "But they are amused," you say, "and excited at these places of resort." And so is the madman who heaves away the sovereigns. In truth, he puts the shining coins to a much more harmless use than these other maniacs. (*F. Ferguson, D.D.*) *Sadness of a lapse after recovery*:—I heard Thackeray in this city lecture on "The Four Georges." With his own peculiar eloquence, he described the sad insanity of George III. I recollect especially his account of the poor king's transient recovery. Mr. Pitt was sent for. It was a great event. The king had "come to himself." The Regency Bill was preparing; but even yet it might not be required. Alas! his sanity was short-lived. For, sitting down at his favourite organ, he played a few notes—stopped—covered his face with his hands—burst into tears—and then reason fled for ever!

"I'll hear what God the Lord will speak;
To His folk He'll speak peace,
And to His saints; but let them not
Return to foolishness."

It lies with them to say whether they will return to it or not. The poor king could not help returning to his foolishness, but Christians can. As spiritual insanity, from the first, is voluntary and culpable, so is the relapse into it. Resist the devil, and he and his hallucinations will flee from you. This youth in the parable did not return to his folly again, but to his father. (*Ibid.*) *A young man come to himself*:—"And when he came to himself." Then he had run away from himself. Precisely. He had not only run away from his father, and his family, and his home; but he had run away from himself, made escape from the voice of reason and of conscience, from his better nature, from all that constituted him a man. No doubt he thought it a very jolly life. Every desire was gratified; every passion had its festival of pleasure. But, of course, this could not last long. If you unhook the pendulum of a clock, the works will go fast and merrily, but they will soon run down. Presently his money was spent; his capacity for pleasure blunted; his character gone; and then the reaction came. The man was famishing. It was not only food he wanted, but the hunger of home was upon him, the yearning for sympathy, and respect, and love; and this brought him to his senses; the prodigal "came to himself." What is it for a young man to come to himself? In common everyday life the expression is variously used, but always denotes that the person has come to better judgment, or to a fuller use of his faculties, than before. I need not say, however, that the expression on the lips of our Divine Lord has a broader and more serious meaning. A man may be perfectly calm in temper, clear in head, and vigorous in body, and yet never have really "come to himself." He may never have apprehended where his real manhood lies. There is a great deal

that we have in common with the lower animals: and, whilst you keep to that plane—so long as you live merely for your baser appetites and passions—so long as all you do is simply to sleep, and walk, and eat, and drink, and toil because you must toil, you have not yet come to yourselves, as reasonable, moral, and spiritual beings. For there are mainly three things in which man is distinguished from the brutes; and it is by these, and not by what he has in common with them, that his life should be inspired and his actions governed. I say that a man truly comes to himself only when the grand motors of his conduct are reason, conscience, and the indwelling Spirit of God. When is it generally that a man comes to himself? Ah! let this story tell. When he gets into trouble. When he “has spent all,” and begins to be in want, and “no man gives unto him.” I don’t mean to say that it is only under such conditions. Thank God, no. There have been men sitting here, with every earthly thing to make them contented, and God has made this pulpit a bow from which He has shot an arrow straight to the centre of their heart, and the arrow was never pulled out till they could call Christ their own. Your sister wrote you a serious letter, and dropped it into your village post-office far away; it was moistened with tears, and perfumed with prayers; and when you read it you clean broke down and fell on your knees; and since that hour you have been another man. The delicious memory of those Sabbath evenings in your country home, ay, maybe twenty years ago, when in the gloaming (for the candles were scarcely needed) you all gathered round, and old father put on his spectacles, and opened the big well-worn Bible, and mother had the youngest on her knee, and you all read verse by verse, and said your catechism, and then sung a psalm together; I say, the memory of this has chastened you amid the follies of this great city, and made you thirst for purer streams than the giddy world can yield. But, as a rule, it is by some trouble or sorrow that God brings a man to himself. Many a man has “come to himself” under the blow of some crushing bereavement. Yes; all the sermons in the world would not move him; all our arguments failed to make an impression. But one day there came to him a stealthy preacher without notes, and that pale preacher was Death; and when he saw his bonnie little sister lying cold in her coffin, or the turf laid smoothly over the grave that contained his precious mother, he could stand it no longer; he said, “From this hour my treasure and my heart shall be in heaven.” And we have had young men here who, like this youth in the parable, never came to themselves till they were in want. You were out of a situation; you could find nothing to do; all your testimonials failed to get you an opening. Some of your friends treated you, as you thought, shabbily. You had letters blowing you up for being unfortunate. You had spent all, and no one gave unto you. Men who used to shake your hand so tightly that your knuckles ached, now gave you but the coldest nod. How next week’s lodging was to be paid you could not see. And then, only then, in the bitterness of your extremity, you flung yourself upon God, and found that you had a Father and a Friend above. Oh, how many never find this out till the day of sorrow comes! A good, pious man met a poor ragged urchin in the street, and, putting his hand on his head, said, “My little man, when your father and your mother forsake you, who will take you up?” And what, think you, was the wee laddie’s answer? “The perlice, sir.” (*J. T. Davidson, D.D.*) *A sinner brought to his right mind:—*1. This young man first “came to himself” with regard to the past. He had thought previously that he was acting “sensibly”: now he sees that he has been playing the fool. He has been trying all along to persuade himself that he has really been enjoying himself; now he suddenly comes to the conclusion that all the while he has been a stranger to real happiness. He looks at those four, or five, or six years: before, he had plumed himself upon the life he had been leading; now, he scarcely dares to think about it; he hides his face with shame; he buries it in his hands, as he sits there in the field, the hot tears streaming through his fingers. “What a fool I have been! What a wretch I have been! What a base ingrate I have been! Good God! wert Thou to strike me down with a thunderbolt of displeasure to the very depths of hell, it is only what I deserve.” 2. And he “comes to himself” with regard to the present. He finds himself face to face with death. Nearer and nearer the grim spectre draws; the bow seems already bent, and the arrow seems already fixed, and in a moment the fatal shaft may fly, and his mortal career may end in doom. Face to face with death—it is an awful thing! He feels it in his own body. That strange numbness that is creeping over him, that sense of mortal weakness, that stupor which has already been paralyzing the senses—what is it? Incipient death. His strength has passed

into weakness; he can scarcely totter across the field; his haggard form seems more fit for a sepulchre than for human society. What can he do? Whatever he can do he must do quickly. The tide of life is ebbing fast; a few more hours, and his opportunity will be gone. It is a long way to the country he has left—a long way to his father's house; if anything is to be done, not so much as a moment is to be lost. 3. And thus it is that he also "comes to himself" with regard to the future. The future! What can he do? What hope is there for him? Has he not lost every chance, and thrown away every possibility? Nay, it strikes him that there is just one faint ray of hope: it seems a very faint one. Is there a possibility that he may get some relief from his friends in this distant land? No, he has given that up altogether. Can he not find a better master somewhere. No, he has tried all through the famine-stricken country, and this man that has "sent him into the fields to feed swine" is the best that he can find. What can he do? Can he work any harder? No, he has no strength left to work. Where is hope to be found? Where is that ray of dim, uncertain light coming from? There rises up within his recollection the memory of a peaceful home, of calm, happy days. The bright sunlight of his childhood returns to his memory like a pleasant dream amidst the frightful horrors of his present experience. Could he regain it; could he retrace his steps, and get one more look at that dear old place; could he but sit down amongst the "hired servants" of his father's house! 4. My friends, he not only "comes to himself" with regard to himself, but also with regard to his father: he had taken a wrong view of his father—a distorted view: he had painted him in the most repulsive colours; now he takes a different view of the case, and comes to the conclusion that, after all, he was wrong. He had wronged those hoary hairs. The thought rises in his mind, "He loved me; yes, he loved me after all; I saw the tear start into his eye when I left home; he wrung my hand when I went away from him, and his lip was quivering; though I have given him so much trouble, I know he loved me; he was never hard on me; when, as a child, I wanted anything reasonable, it was always within my reach; if I had childish troubles, those kind, fatherly hands were laid upon my brow, and fatherly words of tenderness were spoken in my ear—yes, he did love me; I have wronged him, I had no right to think him hard; he was not hard: I wonder if he is changed; years have passed over him, years have passed over me; I left him with a smiling countenance; I put on my best appearance, and tried to seem as though I did not care a straw for leaving him: perhaps he has hardened his heart against me, and will never look at me again; yet, perhaps—perhaps there is something like love in his heart towards me still; surely he cannot have altogether ceased to love his poor wandering boy." So he starts to his feet, and in another moment the word of resolution has sped forth from his lips, "I will arise and go to my father." It is even so with thee, dear awakened sinner. So soon as God begins to awaken thee, He awakens thee first of all with regard to the past. Are there not some of you that are awakened with regard to the past? You used to look upon it with complacency, now you look upon it with horror. You used to think well of yourself, now you cannot speak of yourself too hardly. There was a time when you flattered yourself that, at any rate, you were no worse than other people; now it seems as if you could not invent any epithet sufficiently strong to indicate your horror and disgust at your past life. How is it? You are beginning to "come to yourself," too, with regard to your present. You find yourself face to face with death. Spiritual death has already grasped you; its iron clutch is on you; that dread spectre is looking you in the face; you are beginning to realize, in your own terrible experience, the force of those words, "Dying, thou shalt die!" Do what you will, you cannot writhe out of the grasp of that terrible spiritual arrest. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And you come to yourself with respect to the future. "Is there a possibility that I can be otherwise? May I turn my back upon the past? Is it possible that a sinner like me can lead a new life? May even I become a new creature?" Then it is that the soul begins to "come to itself" with respect to the character of the Father. Ah, my dear friends, you may have maligned Him, you may have slandered Him, you may have allowed Satan to misrepresent Him to your own fancy; you may have conceived of Him "as an austere man, reaping where He had not sown, and gathering where He had not straved." It seemed as though you could not speak too harshly of Him. But all that has changed, and you are beginning to come to the conclusion that after all He is your Father, that He has a Father's tenderness, pity and love; that although you have misrepresented Him so long, and sinned against Him so grossly,

yet there must be something in that heart of His that goes out towards your misery. Ah! my friend, you are only just beginning to "come to yourself" about that Father: but if you will go a little nearer to that Father's house, bare your bosom to that Father's influence—if you will expose yourself to that Father's eye, it will not be long before you will have a different estimate from what you have even at this moment of what that Father's love really is. Think not of God the Father as if He were unsympathetic. Believe what Christ Himself has taught of His Father's love (Oh that I could write it on your heart of hearts at this moment!): "God so loved the world that He gave His Son." (*W. M. Hay Aitken, M.A.*) *A sinner brought to his right mind*:—A Christian father had a son whose conduct had nearly broken his heart. He had prayed for him, instructed him in the things of God, and done all that his deep love for his soul and for his future welfare dictated, but all to no avail. He grew up a vile, hardened sinner, and left his father's home, young in years but old in sin. At length that father was thrown upon a bed of death. Before breathing his last he sent for his prodigal son, and asked him to promise, after his father was laid in the grave, that he would spend one hour alone each day in that room, for three months. The son readily gave the promise. The death of his father made but little impression on him, and again he rushed on in his mad career of sin. That hour alone, however, was a great burden to him. He greatly dreaded it, yet did not dare to break his promise, made under such solemn circumstances. At last one day the hour dragged along slower than usual. He had an engagement with some boon companions, and was in haste to go and enjoy their society. He often consulted his watch to see how the time passed. At last the thought came into his mind, "Why did my father lay upon me this strange obligation?" Then quick as lightning the thought flashed over his mind, "My father was a good man, he loved my soul, and it must have been for my soul's good he did this." This led him to reflect upon his father's love, his past life in all its vileness, his lost and desperate state as a sinner against God's holy law, till he fell upon his knees, and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" He spent not only the hour but the whole day alone with God, nor did he leave the room till it could be said of him, that he "had come to himself." He came out of that room a converted man.

The madness of sinners:—A few months ago, I was conducting a Mission in the north of England, and the clergyman in whose church I was preaching, receiving from an anonymous correspondent one of the handbills which had been circulated in preparation for the Mission, with two words added after the words "A Mission"—viz., "for lunatics"; so that it read, "A Mission for lunatics!" I do not suppose that the man who wrote those words had any particular intention of telling the truth, but it is startling to think how near the truth he came. Perhaps, if we could see things as those bright intelligences see them, who are permitted to hover round this world of ours, and to be witnesses of human action, we should be disposed to regard (is it not possible that they do regard?) this world of ours as one great lunatic asylum. It must seem strange to them that to men and women there should be made such glorious offers, that before their eyes there should be spread such magnificent possibilities, and that, in the folly of their unbelief, they should turn their back upon their own truest interest, and sin against their own souls. Lunatics indeed! There are dangerous lunatics, frenzied by passion or goaded by ambition, so dangerous that sometimes their fellow lunatics have to put a kind of restraint upon them, for fear that the paroxysms of their mortal disease should carry them too far. Then there are harmless lunatics, men and women whose lives are simply insipid, who seem to be just as void of any object in life as the butterfly that flits from flower to flower, drifted about by every influence that happens to be for the moment affecting them, without any stability of purpose, without any recognition of the dignity of their own being. Then, again, there are the self-complacent lunatics, the men and women who are so particularly self-satisfied that they can afford to look down upon everybody else, and persuade themselves that they are models of good sense, and that those who are possessed of that spiritual "wisdom which comes from above," are themselves in a state of insanity. Is it not so? Is not that just the way in which self-complacent men of the world speak about those who know something of the realities of eternity? Have we not heard it again and again, till we are almost tired of hearing it, ever since the days when Festus charged Paul with being "beside himself"? Indeed, this is one of the features of lunacy. You go into a lunatic asylum, and you will always find a large number of patients who regard themselves as injured persons, who are suffering not

from their own disease of insanity, but from the insanity of other people. There are some who fancy themselves kings upon their throne, and their subjects too insane to render them the honour which is their due. Others, who imagine themselves men of vast wealth and possessions, and those who ought to be their servants, too insane to render them the service they have a rightful claim to. So, while they persuade themselves that they indeed are in the full possession of their senses, they also contrive to please themselves by thinking that other persons who are actually sane are afflicted with the very disease from which they are suffering. Friends, it is even so in the spiritual world. The men and women whom Satan has deluded most completely are just those who are the least conscious of their own insanity. The disease has taken so firm a hold upon their moral system that they believe that they are much more sane than those who are living in the light of Divine wisdom. There view of the case is an exact inversion of the truth; and as long as this moral stupor continues, the efforts which are made by those (who see things as they are), to awaken them from their fatal slumber, are regarded by these spiritual lunatics as simply the indication of moral infatuation, and they themselves, in their profound stupor, flatter themselves that they indeed alone are reasonable beings.

(*W. M. Hay Aitken, M.A.*) *He came to himself*:—The word may be applied to one waking out of a deep swoon. He had been unconscious of his true condition, and he had lost all power to deliver himself from it; but now he was coming round again, returning to consciousness and action. Returning, then, to true reason and sound judgment, the prodigal came to himself. Another illustration of the word may be found in the old-world fables of enchantment: when a man was disenthralled from the magician's spell he "came to himself." Classic story has its legend of Circe, the enchantress, who transformed men into swine. Surely this young man in our parable had been degraded in the same manner. He had lowered his manhood to the level of the brutes. It should be the property of man to have love to his kindred, to have respect for right, to have some care for his own interest; this young man had lost all these proper attributes of humanity, and so had become as the beast that perisheth. But as the poet sings of Ulysses, that he compelled the enchantress to restore his companions to their original form, so here we see the prodigal returning to manhood, looking away from his sensual pleasures, and commencing a course of conduct more consistent with his birth and parentage. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Beneficial results of affliction*:—In bringing sinners to their right mind, the sobering influence which God most frequently employs in affliction. A man who had a praying wife was himself a drunkard. He was a gambler, and went to all the races within his reach, usually returning tipsy. Fond of fighting, he was withal a brutal husband, and often struck his wife. Beyond all this, as he wished that there was no God, he tried to persuade himself that there is none. There never was a bolder blasphemer. One night, when he was swearing dreadfully, his wife begged him to desist. "Tom," she said, "the Lord will strike you dead." "Who is the Lord?" he shouted, and then started off in oath after oath with the wildest imprecations, defying the Lord to touch him, vociferating and gesticulating till the perspiration stood upon his brow, and he sank down exhausted by his paroxysm of frantic impiety. For capturing a leviathan like this you would have thought of an iron cable; you would have been for putting a tremendous hook in his nose. But the Lord had hold of him already. How? Through his excellent wife, you reply. Well, she lost her father, and on the Sabbath after the funeral she prevailed on her husband to accompany her to church. The sermon was on the depravity of man. He gnashed his teeth as he heard it, and with all his own corruption stirred to fury he turned on his poor helpmate as she came home, and, in her new mourning, kicked her downstairs. But a silken cord, if it be God's, will draw out leviathan—nay, with such a cord in the hand of a little child He can lead the lion. This brutal father had a daughter two years of age, and out of the mouth of this babe the Lord often stilled the enemy and avenger. When coming home in a savage humour, and knocking about his helpless partner, the little Maria would scramble into her mother's lap, and with her pinafore wiping the tears, would gently bid her "Don't cry, mamma," and turning on him a reproving face, would say, "Ah! naughty papa, to make poor mamma cry." This little one he really loved, and this little one the Lord took. Soon after returning from her grave, the father was once more persuaded to enter a place of worship; and this time the word of the Lord found him. The parable of "The wise and foolish virgins" opened his eyes, and feeling that if he continued in his wickedness he must perish eternally, with all the

earnestness of an awakened conscience he began to seek salvation. Night and day he sought it, often with crying and tears; and when at last the Saviour stood revealed before him, he consecrated life to His service, and has ever since proved a faithful follower and a valiant soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ. (*James Hamilton, D.D.*)

Revolulsion after excess.—Where there is any nobleness in the nature, it occasionally happens, that the very excess of riot leads to a revolulsion. "I was converted by six weeks' debauchery," says a somewhat paradoxical character in fiction; and when the good minister remonstrates against his speaking thus lightly of the Divine operations, he replies, "I am not speaking lightly. If I had not seen that I was making a hog of myself very fast, and that pig-wash, even if I could get plenty of it, was a poor sort of thing, I should never have looked life fairly in the face to see what was to be done with it." And when the Spirit of God enkindles or keeps smouldering on from better days any of the finer feelings, in the very sight of the swine-trough there is enough to sober and startle. Greek writers tell of a creature which combined every element of hideousness, and was capable of much mischief as well; but if by any chance it got a glimpse of itself, the face in the mirror was fatal—the sight of the monster slew the miscreant. The perfection of ugliness is evil, and if, like the basilisk, the sinner could only view his own deformity, it is a sight which self-complacency could never survive. (*Ibid.*)

The pain of self-awakening.—The process of awakening and coming to ourselves is usually painful, sometimes appalling, always humiliating, and hence men shrink from it, choosing rather to sleep on, even if it be in the sleep of death, than to face all the pain, and distress, and trouble, and conflict which must accompany an awakening. I remember when I was a boy a poor waggoner in our parish met with an accident that came within a little of costing him his life. He was bringing a load up a very steep incline when the horse jibed, and man and cart and horse all went over into a reservoir. The unfortunate man was held under water by the shaft of the cart, which had fallen on the top of him, and when at last he was extricated it was supposed that life was extinct. Happily there was a doctor within call—restoratives were applied, and the poor man's life was saved; but when, after he had been under treatment for about an hour, he began to give signs of returning animation, the first exclamation that he uttered was, "Oh, let me die! let me die! Do, do, do let me die!" So cruel was the pain of awakening to one who was half dead. I have often thought that the cry of that poor man at pain of his physical restoration illustrates and explains the apparent perversity of some who seem to run away from conviction, and so endeavour to escape from the blessing they so sorely need. They shrink from coming to themselves because of the pain and anguish that this must need induce. The cry of their coward spirit seems to be not unlike that of that poor half-drowned wretch—"Oh, let me die! Do, do let me die!" But surely, brethren, life is worth having even at such a cost. Surely these sorrows and humiliations of returning vitality, these birth-throes of a new and higher life, are better than "the bitter pains of eternal death," where the anguish and distress are only part of a process of destruction. (*W. M. Hay Aitken, M.A.*)

Brought to himself.—A very interesting incident has recently been published in one of the London serials, concerning the conversion of an "Ethiopian Serenader," through the faithfulness and holy guile of a pious bookseller, in an English country town. As it is guaranteed to be authentic by the Rev. Mr. Maguire, Vicar of Clerkenwell, and illustrates strikingly the portion of the parable already considered, I will insert it here:—"A band or 'troupe' of young men, with hands and faces blackened, and dressed in very grotesque costumes, arranged themselves before a publisher's door one day for an exhibition of their peculiar 'performances.' These people used to be called 'Ethiopian Serenaders.' After they had sung some comic and some plaintive melodies, with their own peculiar accompaniments of gestures and grimaces, one of the party, a tall and interesting young man, who had the 'look' of one who was beneath his proper station, stepped up to the door, tambourine in hand, to ask for a few 'dropping pennies' of the people. Mr. Carr, taking one of the Bibles out of his window, addressed the youth—"See here, young man, he said, 'I will give you a shilling, and this book besides, if you will read a portion of it among your comrades there, and in the hearing of the bystanders.' 'Here's a shilling for an easy job!' he chuckled out to his mates—"I'm going to give you a 'public reading!'" Mr. Carr opened at the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, and, pointing to the eleventh verse, requested the young man to commence reading at that verse. 'Now, Jem, speak up!' said one of the party, 'and earn your shilling like a man!' And Jem took the Book, and read—"And He said, A

certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living." There was something in the voice of the reader, as well as in the strangeness of the circumstances, that lulled all to silence; while an air of seriousness took possession of the youth, and still further commanded the rapt attention of the crowd. He read on—"And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living." 'That's thee, Jem!' ejaculated one of his comrades; 'it's just like what you told me of yourself and your father!' The reader continued—"And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want." 'Why, that's thee again, Jem!' said the voice—"Go on!" "And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him." 'That's like us all!' said the voice, once more interrupting; 'we're all beggars, and might be better than we are! Go on; let's hear what came of it.' And the young man read on, and as he read his voice trembled—"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father—" At this point he fairly broke down, and could read no more. All were impressed and moved. The whole reality of the past rose up to view, and in the clear story of the gospel a ray of hope dawned upon him for his future. His father—his father's house—and his mother's too; and the plenty and the love ever bestowed upon him there; and the hired servants, all having enough; and then himself, his father's son; and his present state, his companionships, his habits, his sins, his poverty, his outcast condition, his absurdly questionable mode of living,—all these came climbing like an invading force of thoughts and reflections into the citadel of his mind, and fairly overcame him. That day—that scene—proved the turning-point of that young prodigal's life. He sought the advice of the Christian friend who had thus providentially interposed for his deliverance. Communications were made to his parents, which resulted in a long-lost and dearly-loved child returning to the familiar earthly home; and, still better, in his return to his heavenly Father! He found, as I trust my readers will, how true are the promises of the parable of the 'Prodigal Son' both for time and for eternity.

"Yes, there is One who will not chide nor scoff,
But beckons us to homes of heavenly bliss;
Beholds the prodigal a great way off,
And flies to meet him with a Father's kiss!"

(F. Ferguson, D.D.) *Trouble draws the soul to God.*—When I was sixteen years of age, a youth very dear to me, two years older than myself, was seized with paralysis of the limbs. He was handsome and amiable and well-conducted—no prodigal, but the delight of the family circle, and a favourite throughout a wider sphere. The ailment advanced by very slow degrees; but it advanced, and he died before he was twenty-two years of age. In the earliest stages he was pleasant, but reserved. Afterwards, for a while, he became sad. At the next stage he opened like a flower in spring, and blossomed into the most attractive beauty, both of person and spirit. He manifested peace and joy in believing. His society was sought even by aged and experienced Christians. After his soul's burden was removed, his face lighted up and his lips opened; he told me fully the history of his spiritual course, which he had kept secret at the time. It was this: When he found himself a cripple, although otherwise enjoying a considerable measure of health, he saw that the world had for him lost its charm. The happiness he had promised himself was blasted. His former portion was gone, and he had none other. After the first sadness passed, he thought of turning towards Christ for comfort; but he was met and precipitously stopped at the very entrance on this path by the reflection: "Christ knows that as long as I had other pleasures I did not care for Him; He knows that if I come to Him now, it is because I have nothing else—that I am making a do-no-better of Him. He will spurn me away. If I had chosen Him while the world was bright before me, He might, perhaps, have received me; but as I never turned to Him till I had lost the portion I preferred, I can expect nothing but upbraiding." This thought kept him long back. It was like a barrier reared across the path—the path that leadeth unto life—and he could not surmount it. By

degrees, however, as he studied the Scriptures in his enforced leisure, he began to perceive that, although he deserved to be so treated, Christ would not treat him so. He discovered that "this Man receiveth sinners" when they come, without asking what it was that brought them. Further, he learned that whether one come when the world is smiling, or when it is shrouded in darkness—whether he come in health or in disease—it is in every case the love of Christ that draws him; and that no sinner saved will have any credit in the end. All and all alike will attribute their salvation to the free mercy of God. At first his thought was, "If I had the recommendation of having come when my fortune was at the full, I could have entertained a hope." But at last he learned that whosoever will may come, and that he who cometh will in no wise be cast out. On these grounds he came at Christ's command, was accepted, and redeemed. (*W. Arnot, D.D.*)

Bread enough and to spare.—*Abundance in the Father's house*.—I. First, let us consider for a short time **THE MORE THAN ABUNDANCE OF ALL GOOD THINGS IN THE FATHER'S HOUSE.** Of all that thou needest, there is with God an all-sufficient, a superabounding supply—"bread enough and to spare." Let us prove this to thee. 1. First, consider the Father Himself; and whosoever shall rightly consider the Father will at once perceive that there can be no stint to mercy, no bound to the possibilities of grace. If thou starve, thou starvest because thou wilt starve; for in the Father's house there is "bread enough and to spare." 2. But now consider a second matter which may set this more clearly before us. Think of the Son of God, who is indeed the true Bread of Life for sinners. In the atonement of Christ Jesus there is "bread enough and to spare"; even as Paul wrote to Timothy, "He is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe." 3. But now let me lead you to another point of solemnly joyful consideration, and that is the Holy Spirit. Now, sinner, thou needest a new life and thou needest holiness, for both of these are necessary to make thee fit for heaven. Is there a provision for this? The Holy Spirit is provided and given in the covenant of grace; and surely in Him there is "enough and to spare." What cannot the Holy Spirit do? Being Divine, nothing can be beyond His power. I must leave this point, but I cannot do so without adding that I think "Bread enough and to spare" might be taken for the motto of the gospel. II. According to the text there was not only bread enough in the house, but **THE LOWEST IN THE FATHER'S HOUSE ENJOYED ENOUGH AND TO SPARE.** We can never make a parable run on all fours, therefore we cannot find the exact counterpart of the "hired servants." I understand the prodigal to have meant this, that the very lowest menial servant employed by his father had bread to eat, and had "bread enough and to spare." Now, how should we translate this? Why, sinner, the very lowest creature that God has made, that has not sinned against Him, is well supplied and has abounding happiness. There are adaptations for pleasure in the organizations of the lowest animals. See how the gnats dance in the summer's sunbeam; hear the swallows as they scream with delight when on the wing. He who cares for birds and insects will surely care for men. God who hears the ravens when they cry, will He not hear the returning penitent? He gives these insects happiness; did He mean me to be wretched? Surely He who opens His hand and supplies the lack of every living thing, will not refuse to open His hand and supply my needs if I seek His face. Yet I must not make these lowest creatures to be the hired servants. Whom shall I then select among men? I will put it thus. The very worst of sinners that have come to Christ have found grace "enough and to spare," and the very least of saints who dwell in the house of the Lord find love "enough and to spare." Take then the most guilty of sinners, and see how bountifully the Lord treats them when they turn unto Him. Did the blood of Christ avail to cleanse them? Oh, yes; and more than cleanse, for it added to them beauty not their own. Now, if the chief of sinners bear this witness, so do the most obscure of saints. You have many afflictions, doubts, and fears, but have you any complaints against your Lord? When you have waited upon Him for daily grace, has He denied you? III. Notice in the third place, that the text dwells upon **THE MULTITUDE OF THOSE WHO HAVE "BREAD ENOUGH AND TO SPARE."** The prodigal lays an emphasis upon that word, "*How many hired servants of my father's!*" He was thinking of their great number, and counting them over. He thought of those that tended the cattle, of those that went out with the camels, of those that watched the sheep, and those that minded the corn, and those that waited in the house; he ran them over in his mind: his father was great in the land, and had many servants; yet he knew that they all had of the best food "enough and to spare." Now, O thou awakened sinner, thou who dost feel this

morning thy sin and misery, think of the numbers upon whom God has bestowed His grace already. Think of the countless hosts in heaven : if thou wert introduced there to-day, thou wouldst find it as easy to tell the stars, or the sands of the sea, as to count the multitudes that are before the throne even now. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) I perish with hunger.—*The hunger of the soul*.—What I propose for our meditation is the truth here expressed, that a life separated from God is a life of bitter hunger, or even of spiritual starvation. I. To exhibit THE TRUE GROUNDS OF THE FACT STATED; for, as we discover how and for what reasons the life of sin must be a life of hunger, we shall see the more readily and clearly the force of those illustrations by which the fact is exhibited. The great principle that underlies the whole subject and all the facts pertaining to it is, that the soul is a creature that wants food, in order to its satisfaction, as truly as the body. No principle is more certain, and yet there is none so generally overlooked or hidden from the sight of men. Job brings it forward, by a direct and simple comparison, when he says, "For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat"; where he means by the ear, you perceive, not the outward but the inward ear of the understanding. So the psalmist says, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness." And so also the prophet, beholding his apostate countrymen dying for hunger and thirst in their sins, calls to them, saying, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." In the same way, an apostle speaks of them that have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come; and another, of them that have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and therefore desire the sincere milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby. True, these are all figures of speech, transferred from the feeding of the body to that of the soul. But they are transferred because they have a fitness to be transferred. The analogy of the soul is so close to that of the body that it speaks of its hunger, its food, its fulness, and growth, and fatness, under the images it derives from the body. Hence you will observe that our blessed Lord appears to have always the feeling that He has come down into a realm of hungry, famishing souls. Apart from God, the soul is an incomplete creature, a poor, blank fragment of existence, hungry, dry, and cold. And still, alas! it cannot think so. Therefore Christ comes into the world to incarnate the Divine nature, otherwise unrecognized, before it; so to reveal God to its knowledge, enter Him into its faith and feeling, make Him its living bread, the food of its eternity. Therefore of His fulness we are called to feed, receiving of Him freely grace for grace. When He is received, He restores the consciousness of God, fills the soul with the Divine light, and sets it in that connection with God which is life—eternal life. Holding this view of the inherent relation between created souls and God as their nourishing principle, we pass—II. To a consideration of THE NECESSARY HUNGER OF A STATE OF SIN, AND THE TOKENS BY WHICH IT IS INDICATED. A hungry herd of animals, waiting for the time of their feeding, do not show their hunger more convincingly by their impatient cries, and eager looks and motions, than the human race do theirs in the works, and ways, and tempers of their selfish life. I can only point you to a few of these demonstrations. And a very impressive and remarkable one you have in this—viz., the common endeavour to make the body receive double, so as to satisfy both itself and the soul, too, with its pleasures. The effort is, how continually, to stimulate the body by delicacies, and condiments, and sparkling bowls, and licentious pleasures of all kinds, and so to make the body do double service. Hence, too, the drunkenness, and high feasting, and other vices of excess. The animals have no such vices, because they have no hunger save simply that of the body; but man has a hunger also of the mind or soul when separated from God by his sin, and therefore he must somehow try to pacify that. And he does it by a work of double feeding put upon the body. We call it sensuality. But the body asks not for it. The body is satisfied by simply that which allows it to grow and maintain its vigour. It is the unsatisfied, hungry mind that flies to the body for some stimulus of sensation, compelling it to devour so many more of the husks, or carobs, as will feed the hungry prodigal within. There is no end to the diverse acts men practise to get some food for their soul; and to whatever course they turn themselves you will see as clearly as possible that they are hungry. Nay, they say it themselves. What sad bewailings do you hear from them, calling the world ashes, wondering at the poverty of existence, fretting at the courses of Providence, and blaming their harshness,

raging profanely against God's appointments, and venting their impatience with life in curses on its emptiness. All this, you understand, is the hunger they are in. Feeding on carobs only, as they do, what shall we expect but to see them feed impatiently? This also you will notice as a striking evidence that, however well they succeed in the providing of earthly things, they are never satisfied. They say they are not, have it for a proverb that no man is, or can be. How can they be satisfied with lands, or money, or honour, or any finite good, when their hunger is infinite, reaching after God and the fulness of His infinite life—God, who is the object of their intelligence, their love, their hope, their worship; the complement of their weakness, the crown of their glory, the sublimity of their rest for ever. Such kind of hunger manifestly could not be satisfied with any finite good, and therefore it never is. (*H. Bushnell, D.D.*)

Deceived by pleasure:—Worldly pleasure, like the rose, is sweet, but it has its thorn. Like the bee it gives some honey, but it carries its sting. Like Judas, it gives the kiss, but it is that of the betrayer. Pleasure is good for sauce but not for food; it may do for digestion, but not for a dinner. Those who get most of it are most deceived. (*C. Leach.*)

Hunger felt:—If a man is dying of hunger, he feels it, or of thirst, he feels it; but the misery of a sinner is not to know his misery. Here the type of the prodigal fails. I offer a man the bread of life, and he tells me he is not hungry; living water, and he puts aside the cup, saying, "I am not thirsty"; I find him stricken down with a mortal disease, but, on bringing a physician to his bedside, he bids us go, and not disturb him, but leave him to sleep, for he feels no pain. Insensibility to pain is his worst symptom, fatal proof that mortification has begun, and that, unless it can be arrested, all is over—you may go, make his coffin, and dig him a grave. But let sensibility return, so that on pressure being applied to the seat of disease, he shrinks and shrieks out with pain; alarmed and ignorant, his attendants may imagine that now his last hour is come, but the man of skill knows better. There is life in that cry—it proves that the tide has turned, that he shall live. Sign as blessed, when brought to a sense of his sins, a man feels himself perishing; cries with Peter, sinking among the waves of Galilee, "I perish"; with the prodigal, sitting by the swine-troughs, "I perish"; with the jailer, at midnight in the prison, "What shall I do to be saved?" (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*)

I will arise and go to my father.—*Homesickness*:—There is nothing like hunger to take the energy out of a man. A hungry man can toil neither with pen nor hand nor foot. There has been many an army defeated not so much for lack of ammunition as for lack of bread. It was that lack that took the fire out of this young man of the text. Storm and exposure will wear out any man's life in time, but hunger makes quick work. The most awful cry ever heard on earth is the cry for bread. I know there are a great many people who try to throw a fascination, a romance, a halo, about sin; but notwithstanding all that Lord Byron and George Sand have said in regard to it, it is a mean, low, contemptible business, and putting food and fodder into the troughs of a herd of iniquities that root and wallow in the soul of man, is a very poor business for men and women intended to be sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty; and when this young man resolved to go home, it was a very wise thing for him to do, and the only question is, whether we will follow him. I. THIS RESOLUTION WAS FORMED IN A DISGUST AT HIS CIRCUMSTANCES. If this young man had been by his employer set to culturing flowers, or training vines over an arbour, or keeping account of the pork market, or overseeing other labourers, he would not have thought of going home. If he had his pockets full of money, if he had been able to say, "I have a thousand dollars now of my own; what's the use of my going back to my father's house? Do you think I am going back to apologize to the old man?" Ah! it was his pauperism, it was his beggary. A man never wants the gospel until he realizes he is in a famine-struck state. II. THIS RESOLUTION OF THE YOUNG MAN OF THE TEXT WAS FOUNDED IN SORROW AT HIS MISBEHAVIOUR. It was not mere physical plight. It was grief that he had so maltreated his father. It is a sad thing after a father has done everything for a child to have that child be ungrateful.

"How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is,
To have a thankless child."

That is Shakespeare. "A foolish son is the heaviness of his mother."

That is the Bible. Well, my friends, have not some of us been cruel prodigals? Have we not maltreated our Father? And such a Father!

III. THIS RESOLUTION OF THE TEXT WAS FOUNDED IN A FEELING OF HOMESICKNESS. I do not know how long this young man had been away from his father's house, but there is something about the reading of my text that makes me think he was homesick. Some of you know what that feeling is. Far away from home sometimes, surrounded by everything bright and pleasant—plenty of friends—you have said, "I would give the world to be home to-night." Well, this young man was homesick for his father's house. Are there any here to-day homesick for God, homesick for heaven? IV. THE RESOLUTION WAS IMMEDIATELY PUT INTO EXECUTION. The context says, "He arose and came to his father." There is a man who had the typhoid fever, he said: "Oh! if I could get over this terrible distress; if this fever should depart; if I could be restored to health, I would all the rest of my life serve God." The fever departed. He got well enough to go over to New York and attend to business. He is well to-day—as well as he ever was. Where is the broken vow? (*De W. Talmage, D.D.*)

Two prodigals.—I will tell you of two prodigals—the one that got back, and the other that did not get back. In Richmond there is a very prosperous and beautiful home in many respects. A young man wandered off from that home. He wandered very far into sin. They heard of him after, but he was always on the wrong track. He would not go home. At the door of that beautiful home one night there was a great outcry. The young man of the house ran down and opened the door to see what was the matter. It was midnight. The rest of the family were asleep. There were the wife and the children of this prodigal young man. The fact was he had come home and driven them out. He said, "Out of this house. Away with these children; I will dash their brains out. Out into the storm!" The mother gathered them up and fled. The next morning the brother, the young man who had stayed at home, went out to find this prodigal brother and son, and he came where he was, and saw the young man wandering up and down in front of the place where he had been staying, and the young man who had kept his integrity said to the older brother: "Here, what does all this mean? What is the matter with you? Why do you act in this way?" The prodigal looked at him and said: "Who am I? Who do you take me to be?" He said: "You are my brother?" "No, I am not. I am a brute. Have you seen anything of my wife and children? Are they dead? I drove them out last night in the storm. I am a brute, John, do you think there is any help for me? Do you think I will ever get over this life of dissipation?" He said: "John, there is just one thing that will stop this." The prodigal ran his fingers across his throat and said: "That will stop it, and I'll stop it before night. Oh! my brain; I can stand it no longer." That prodigal never got home. But I will tell you of a prodigal that did get home. In England two young men started from their fathers' house and went down to Portsmouth—I have been there—a beautiful seaport. Some of you have been there. The father could not pursue his children—for some reason he could not leave home—and so he wrote a letter down to Mr. Griffin, saying:—"Mr. Griffin,—I wish you would go and see my two sons. They have arrived in Portsmouth, and there they are going to take ship, and going away from home. I wish you would persuade them back." Mr. Griffin went and tried to persuade them back. He persuaded one to go; he went with very easy persuasion, because he was very homesick already. The other young man said: "I will not go. I have had enough of home; I'll never go home." "Well," said Mr. Griffin, "then, if you won't go home, I'll get you a respectable position on a respectable ship." "No, you won't," said the prodigal; "no, you won't. I am going as a private sailor, as a common sailor—that will plague my father most; and what will do most to tantalize and worry him will please me best." Years passed on, and Mr. Griffin was seated in his study one day, when a messenger came to him saying there was a young man in irons on a ship at the dock—a young man condemned to death—who wished to see this clergyman. Mr. Griffin went down to the dock and went on shipboard. The young man said to him, "You don't know me, do you?" "No," he said, "I don't know you." "Why, don't you remember that young man you tried to persuade to go home, and he wouldn't go?" "Oh, yes!" said Mr. Griffin; "are you that man?" "Yes, I am that man," said the other. "I would like to have you pray for me. I have committed murder, and I must die; but I don't want to go out of this world until some one prays for me. You are my father's friend, and I would like to have you pray for me." Mr. Griffin went from

judicial authority to judicial authority to get that young man's pardon. He slept not night nor day. He went from influential person to influential person, until in some way he got that young man's pardon. He came down on the dock, and as he arrived on the dock with the pardon, the father came. He had heard that his son, under a disguised name, had been committing crime, and was going to be put to death. So Mr. Griffin and the father went on the ship's deck, and at the very moment Mr. Griffin offered the pardon to the young man, the old father threw his arms around the son's neck, and the son said, "Father, I have done very wrong, and I am very sorry. I wish I had never broken your heart. I am very sorry." "Oh!" said the father, "don't mention it. It won't make any difference now. It is all over. I forgive you, my son," and he kissed him and kissed him and kissed him. To-day I offer you the pardon of the gospel—full pardon, free pardon. I do not care what your crime has been. Though you say you have committed a crime against God, against your own soul, against your fellow-man, against your family, against the day of judgment, against the Cross of Christ—whatever your crime has been here is pardon, full pardon, and the very moment you take that pardon your heavenly Father throws His arms around about you and says, "My son, I forgive you. It is all right. You are as much in my favour now as if you had never sinned." Oh! there is joy on earth and joy in heaven. (*Ibid.*)

Good resolutions to be cherished:—The good motions of God's blessed Spirit, at any time, in any measure, though never so weak, begun, are not to be choked, but to be cherished. When the Lord shall put any good motion into our hearts, we are to nourish and cherish the same; to one good motion we must add a second, and to that a third, and to them a many, and so fall to blowing, and give not over until at length they break forth into a comfortable flame of godly practice. "Quench not the Spirit," saith the apostle; that is, quell not, choke not the gifts and motions of the Holy Ghost. He useth a metaphor borrowed from fire, whose heat and light when it is put out, is said to be quenched. Thus also he exhorts Timothy to stir up the graces of God which be in him. And therefore, in the next place, let it serve for admonition to thee, and me, and to us all, that we beware how we suffer that blessed heat to slake, which by God's grace begins to be enkindled in our hearts. Suffer not that coal, that holy motion which the Lord hath cast into thy bosom, to die within thee, but blow it up, lay on more fuel, add daily more and more matter to it, and tremble to lose the least measure of God's gracious gifts. Be frequent in spiritual exercises, as in hearing, reading, meditation, Christian conference, prayer, and the like. Let no means be neglected that God hath ordained for the working of establishment. (*N. Rogers.*)

Resolution lasting:—Make not thyself ridiculous both to God and man. We all love lasting stuff in a suit, we cannot away with that horse that will tire; and can God like such as do not continue? He cannot do it. (*Ibid.*)

Resolution not followed to execution:—Their purposes being like the minutes of a clock, the second follows the first, and the third the second, all day and year long, but never overtake the one the other. Many there are also, who when the hand of God is upon them by losses, or sickness, or such like visitation, they purpose and promise great reformation; but when God's rod is removed, and His hand taken away, they are as bad as ever they were. So that we say of them, as the wise man by shearing his hogs, "Here is a great deal of cry, but a little wool." Here is a great deal of purpose, but a little practice; abundance of resolution, but small store of action. (*Ibid.*)

Satan's assailing resolutions:—As a man pulling at an oak or other tree, if he finds it yielding, he plucks with greater force, and leaveth not till he have it down, so in this case, if Satan find us doubting and wavering, he will the more violently assault us, and not rest until he overcome us, when, if we were resolute and constant, and did thus resist him with settled determination, he would be out of heart, and, as James saith, "fly from us." (*Ibid.*)

Good resolutions brought to perfection:—But some may demand, What good means are to be used for the bringing these good motions to perfection, which is no easy matter, the devil being ready to steal every good motion out of our hearts, and our own corruption to extinguish it, before we can bring it forth into actions? For the attaining to this, let these rules be practised: First, resolve upon a good ground, build thy resolution on a strong foundation. If thou resolvest to leave any sin, consider well the absolute necessity of forsaking it, the danger it will bring if it be continued in. A second means is speedy execution; delay not, but speedily put in practice. Before the iron cool, it is good striking, and while the wax is pliable, it is good setting on the seal; and, therefore, what Solomon exhorteth in the case of vows is generally to be practised

in all holy purposes and motions, "be not slack to perform them." They that know themselves know how fickle and unconstant their hearts are. Now as we would deal with a variable and unconstant man, so let us deal with these hearts of ours. We would take such a one at his word, and lay hold of the opportunity, when we find him in a good vein, lest within a short space he alter his mind. Our hearts are far more variable and unconstant than any man is. (*Ibid.*) *Father*:—Remove the word Father from this sentence, and you rob it at once of all the wondrous pathos that lies in it, and that has so often brought tears to the eye of the penitent and contrition to his heart. Let us say, "Oh, Sovereign King, I have sinned against Thee!" and we may tremble, but we do not weep. "Oh, Judge of all, I have sinned against Thee!" and perhaps we tremble still more, but our heart doesn't melt. But let us say and feel, "Father, I have sinned against Thee and Thy Fatherly love," and, lo! our hard heart begins to break, and the unbidden tears most likely begin to rise. What a doubly damnable sin to sin against a Father, and such a Father! A young man at one of our meetings to whom I had spoken on the previous evening said to me, "When I went home last night I took up my Bible and began to read. I had not read very long when I came to these words, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son;' and, I can tell you, they pretty well broke my heart. I lay awake just sobbing, for I don't know how long, repeating over these words, 'Father, I have sinned.'" (*W. Hay Aiken, M.A.*) *Man invited to return to his home*:—Major D. W. Whittle was asked to preach Christ to a great crowd in the opera house at Pittsburg, and had but a few moments' notice. He asked his wife, "What shall I say?" His little girl spoke up earnestly, "Papa, tell them to come home." He did tell them, and God wonderfully blessed the simple message to the conversion of many souls. (*Christian Age.*) *Great resolutions*:—History tells us that great soldiers before their great battles, as Cæsar at the Rubicon, and Lord Clive at Plassey, looked like men inspired the moment they resolved on their line of action. An earnest resolution, and the honest effort to carry it through, will fetch you new strength. The prodigal had formed the great resolve in the greatest of all battles. And no sooner resolved than done—he is off for home. He is quick to turn his thought into purpose, and his purpose into an accomplished fact. He had often repented before in a way, and then repented of his repentance; but now he must burn his boats, and break down all the bridges behind him, and make return to the swine-troughs impossible. (*J. Wells.*) *The Fatherhood of God*:—I advise every one—who wishes to be a true penitent—first of all to get a firm hold upon the fact that God is his Father, his loving Father still. Our sins do not change the Fatherhood of God. God loves sinners. If God did not love sinners, why did He give His own dearly beloved Son to die for sinners? And is not the feeling that his Father is grieved the severest part of that punishment, be that punishment whatever it may, to every child who has not quite sinned away the finer joys and the natural instincts of the human heart? "I can bear my punishment, father; but I cannot bear your tears, father!" was the true outcome of a son's inmost feelings under his father's chastening. Never, whatever you have done to offend God, or how long you have offended God, never let go the feeling of the confidence of a child to a loving Father. "He is my Father, He is not changed." You are, not He. Do not confuse your feelings and His feelings. Cling to the Fatherhood of God. The Father may chasten, very severely chasten, but He is a Father who never hates; He is a Father who never tires; He is a Father who cannot finally refuse to accept the smallest confession, or one really penitential tear. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *A mental picture*:—The picture of the workings of the prodigal's mind and of their practical results brings before us the features of genuine repentance with incomparably greater clearness and effect than a treatise of any supposable length on the abstract subject would have done. The features of true repentance apparent there are these: 1. A change of mind: he "came to himself." How opposite his views and feelings now from what they had been when he forsook the paternal abode! 2. A deep sense of guilt arising from a right view of sin, as committed not against man only, but against heaven; not against his father only, but against God: "I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight," &c. 3. A consequent sense of entire unworthiness, accompanied with a conviction that, if he met with a favourable reception, he should owe it entirely to free clemency; he should have no claim, no title to it, but might justly be rejected: "I have sinned, and am no more worthy." And—4. A returning conviction that there was no happiness for him but under his father's roof, and in the possession of his father's favour: "I

am no more worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants ; " let me be but under thy roof, let me be the lowest menial ; but let me not be cast out of thy sight, for " blessed are even these thy servants. " I have made myself wretched and unworthy, and I envy the lowest of them. This is the very counterpart of the spirit in which a truly penitent sinner comes back to God. (*R. Wardlaw.*) I have sinned.—*Confession of sin* :—And you will see how these words, in the lips of different men, indicate very different feelings. I. The first case I shall bring before you is that of the **HARDENED SINNER**, who, when under terror, says, " I have sinned. " And you will find the text in the Book of Exodus, the 9th chap. and 27th verse : " And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time : the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. " But why this confession from the lips of the haughty tyrant ? Of what avail and of what value was his confession ? The repentance that was born in the storm died in the calm ; that repentance of his that was begotten amidst the thunder and the lightning, ceased so soon as all was hushed in quiet. II. Now for a second text. I beg to introduce to you another character—the **DOUBLE-MINDED MAN**, who says, " I have sinned, " and feels that he has, and feels it deeply too, but who is so worldly-minded that he " loves the wages of unrighteousness. " The character I have chosen to illustrate this, is that of Balaam (see Numb. xxii. 34). III. And now a third character, and a third text. In the First Book of Samuel, the 15th chap. and 24th verse : " And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned. " Here is the **INSINCERE MAN**—the man who is not, like Balaam, to a certain extent sincere in two things ; but the man who is just the opposite—who has no prominent point in his character at all, but is moulded everlastingly by the circumstances that are passing over his head. To say, " I have sinned, " in an unmeaning manner, is worse than worthless, for it is a mockery of God thus to confess with insincerity of heart. IV. **THE DOUBTFUL PENITENT**. Achan (Josh. vii. 20). Achan is the representative of some whose characters are doubtful on their deathbeds ; who do repent apparently, but of whom the most we can say is, that we hope their souls are saved at last, but indeed we cannot tell. V. I must now give you another bad case ; the worst of all. It is the **REPENTANCE OF DESPAIR**. Will you turn to the 27th chap. of Matthew, and the 4th verse ? There you have a dreadful case of the repentance of despair. VI. And now I come into daylight. I have been taking you through dark and dreary confessions ; I shall detain you there no longer, but bring you out to the two good confessions which I have read to you. The first is that of Job in 7th chap., at the 20th verse : " I have sinned ; what shall I do unto Thee, O Thou preserver of men ? " This is the **REPENTANCE OF THE SAINT**. VII. I come now to the last instance, which I shall mention ; it is the case of the prodigal. In Luke xv. 18, we find the prodigal says : " Father, I have sinned. " Oh, here is a **BLESSED CONFESSION** ? Here is that which proves a man to be a regenerate character—" Father, I have sinned. " (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Inordinate sorrow not necessary to repentance* :—If thus, then be you assured, that though you have not been cast down under that depth of humiliation that others have, yet that degree of humiliation you have had, God in wisdom saw to be competent, and sufficient for you. It is good to grieve, because we can grieve no more ; but to perplex the soul with needless fears, because we have not been so much humbled as others (the former marks and signs being found in us) argues ignorance and unthankfulness. As if one should cry out of a skilful chururgeon, for setting our broken bones with less pain, or curing our wounds with less smart, than he did some others. It may be, God in mercy hath kept as yet from thee the ghastly aspect of thy sins, lest the horror of them should overwhelm thee. Bless God for it, and think not the worse of Him nor of thyself, if thou be brought home by enticements and allurements. It is no small advantage the devil takes through immoderate sorrow of young beginners. (*N. Rogers.*) *The prodigal's return* :—That cry of the prodigal to his father, which framed itself spontaneously in his mind, when first he came to himself in his misery and degradation—I suppose it is the common cry of repentant humanity. Taking this cry, therefore, as the natural utterance of penitent humanity, let us observe two things about it. In the first place, it is very humble, and therefore very hopeful. " I am no more worthy to be called thy son, " is no mere formal expression, such as might serve a purpose without costing anything ; his condition and his state of mind were too serious to allow of hypocrisies, conscious or unconscious ; it was the genuine feeling of the man, a feeling very painful and humiliating, yet the one which had the greatest hold of his mind, and therefore found the strongest expression in his words. I need not say that a genuine sense of unworthiness and of self-condemna-

tion is the most hopeful sign which God can behold in His returning children. But we have to observe, in the second place, that the words which the prodigal intended to say, however natural and however hopeful they might be, were founded on a mistake, and implied an impossibility. For better or worse, he was a son, and a son he must remain; his sins had been the sins of a son, not of a servant; his punishment had been the misery of a self-exiled son, not of a runaway servant. Now let us ask how it may have fared with him in after days. Was there nothing hard in store, nothing difficult, when the first absorbing happiness of his welcome home was past? Would the habits and the manners which he had learnt in his long wanderings suit the gravity of his father's house? Would the restlessness which grows with travel let him be at ease even within those pleasant walls? Could he without great effort exchange his former unrestrained licence for the dutiful behaviour of a younger son? In one word, could he, without a constant struggle with himself, fill again the place of a child within his father's home? Now, it seems to me that here is a lesson most true, most necessary for us to learn. Many of us are apt to think that when once the prodigal has returned, when once the sinner has repented, then all the struggle and the difficulty and the sad consequence of former wilfulness is past and over—that henceforth all is calm and easy. Alas! what ignorance of human nature, even of redeemed human nature, does such a fancy display. The starved and ragged wanderer is indeed clasped within his father's arms, is clothed in the finest and feasted of the best, but—he has to live henceforth as a son, and to render to his father the ready, thoughtful, loving obedience which is due from a son. And this, although it be so great a privilege, so much more than we could have asked, is yet so hard to the obstinate waywardness, to the ingrained lawlessness of our hearts. It is so hard that God will have us as children, or not have us at all. If we might only be as hired servants, and have our tasks assigned to us, and if we did not do them bear the loss of wages, and hear no more about it! The more unworthy we feel ourselves to be, the more conscious we are of the real inferiority of our character and of the very mixed nature of our motives, the more painful must we feel our position to be as sons of God. For my own part, I will say that this demand of a free and loving obedience, of an obedience which is absolutely unlimited, and which must be a law unto itself, is harder than any which God could have made of perverse and fallen creatures such as we. It seems to me that it would be infinitely easier to face the fires or the wild beasts once for all, than always to render the loving service of a child to the Father in heaven, always to strain after conformity to a standard which is far above our reach, always to accommodate ourselves to the dispositions of One who is infinitely holier than we. What is this to one who feels the law of sin at work within him, who feels the old wildness yet untamed, the old self-will yet unbroken, who consents to the rule of the Divine life with his mind, but cannot find how to put it in practice—what is it to him but a lifelong, a daily, hourly martyrdom? What is it but a perpetual crucifixion—as, indeed, the Bible calls it? Even so; that is the law of Christian life. What is happy and hopeful about it is due to God's great love in receiving us once more as His children; what is sad and disheartening about it is due to our own sin and folly in having been alienated so long from Him. This is sad and disheartening in very truth, but it is saved from being intolerable by two things—the hope of heaven, and the sympathy of Christ. For concerning heaven, while many beautiful things are written in the Word of God, none is written so beautiful as that simple saying, “His servants shall serve Him”; for that is the very thing we are always trying to do, and always failing to do properly in this life. There shall really come a time when it will *not* be hard, *not* be painful, *not* be against the grain to do God's will in all things—when we shall serve Him joyfully, naturally, as children should, from love, not from fear, for love, not for reward. And then for the present distress there is the sympathy of Christ. That prodigal had an elder brother who would certainly have added to his difficulties, who would have watched for and reported any breach of propriety, and rejoiced in any mortification. We have an elder Brother who has shared the same hardships and endured the same discipline as ourselves—who feels an infinite sympathy for the failures, the self-reproaches, the mortifications, which He understands so well. Far from alienating Him by our want of success, every disappointment over which we grieve only wakes in Him a livelier pity and a more tender love. (*R. Winterbotham, M.A.*) *The difficulty of God's service to recent converts*:—We know that God's service is perfect freedom, not a servitude; but this it is in the case of those who have long served

Him; at first it is a kind of servitude, it is a task till our likings and tastes come to be in unison with those which God has sanctioned. It is the happiness of saints and angels in heaven to take pleasure in their duty, and nothing but their duty; for their mind goes that one way, and pours itself out in obedience to God, spontaneously and without thought or deliberation, just as man *sins* naturally. This is the state to which we are tending if we give ourselves up to religion; but in its commencement, religion is necessarily almost a task and a formal service. When a man begins to see his wickedness, and resolves on leading a new life, he asks, "What must I do?" he has a wide field before him, and he does not know how to enter it. He must be bid to do some particular plain acts of obedience to fix him. He must be told to go to church regularly, to say his prayers morning and evening, and steadily to read the Scriptures. This will limit his efforts to a certain end, and relieve him of the perplexity and indecision which the greatness of his work at first causes. But who does not see that this going to church, praying in private, and reading Scripture, must in his case be, in great measure, what is called a form and a task? Having been used to do as he would, and indulge himself, and having very little understanding or liking for religion, he cannot take pleasure in these religious duties; they will necessarily be a weariness to him; nay, he will not be able even to give his attention to them. Nor will he see the use of them; he will not be able to find they make him better though he repeat them again and again. Thus his obedience at first is altogether that of a hired servant, "The servant knoweth not what his lord doeth." This is Christ's account of him. The servant is not in his lord's confidence, does not understand what he is aiming at, or why he commands this and forbids that. He executes the commands given him, he goes hither and thither, punctually, but by the mere letter of the command. Such is the state of those who *begin* religious obedience. (*J. H. Newman, D.D.*)

Complete surrender to God:—There is no mention made here of any offering on his part to his father, any propitiatory work. This should be well observed. The truth is, that our Saviour has shown us in all things a more perfect way than was ever before shown to man. As He promises us a more exalted holiness, an exacter self-command, a more generous self-denial, and a fuller knowledge of truth, so He gives us a more true and noble repentance. The most noble repentance (if a fallen being can be noble in his fall), the most decorous conduct in a conscious sinner, is an unconditional surrender of himself to God—not a bargaining about terms, not a scheming (so to call it) to be received back again, but an instant surrender of himself in the first instance. Without knowing what will become of him, whether God will spare or not, merely with so much hope in his heart as not utterly to despair of pardon, still not looking merely to pardon as an end, but rather looking to the claims of the Benefactor whom he has offended, and smitten with shame, and the sense of his ingratitude, he must surrender himself to his lawful Sovereign. He is a runaway offender; he must come back, as a very first step, before anything can be determined about him, bad or good; he is a rebel, and must lay down his arms. Self-devised offerings might do in a less serious matter; as an atonement for sin, they imply a defective view of the evil and extent of sin in his own case. Such is that perfect way which nature shrinks from, but which our Lord enjoins in the parable—a surrender. The prodigal son waited not for his father to show signs of placability. He did not merely approach a space, and then stand as a coward, curiously inquiring, and dreading how his father felt towards him. He made up his mind at once to degradation at the best, perhaps to rejection. He arose and went straight on towards his father, with a collected mind; and though his relenting father saw him from a distance, and went out to meet him, still his purpose was that of an instant frank submission. Such must be Christian repentance: First we must put aside the idea of finding a remedy for our sin; then, though we feel the guilt of it, yet we must set out firmly towards God, not knowing for certain that we shall be forgiven. He, indeed, meets us on our way with the tokens of His favour, and so He bears up human faith, which else would sink under the apprehension of meeting the Most High God; still, for our repentance to be Christian there must be in it that generous temper of self-surrender, the acknowledgment that we are unworthy to be called any more His sons, the abstinence from all ambitious hopes of sitting on his right hand or His left, and the willingness to bear the heavy yoke of bond-servants, if He should put it upon us. (*Ibid.*)

Our need of the Father:—1. I would first recall your attention to seasons which must have marked more or less frequently the lives of all who hear me—seasons of inward uneasiness without any outward cause. They come some-

times in the dim solitude of evening or the quiet night-watches, sometimes in the yet deeper solitude of a heartless human throng. 2. We feel, it seems to me, peculiar need of a Father in heaven, in our communion with the fair and glorious scenes of nature. Did you ever see a little child taken by his father to see some glittering pageant, which seemed to the child immensely vast and grand? And have you not marked how the child will at short intervals look away from the gay show to his father's face, as if to fortify himself by a glance of love? Were I an atheist, I would cut myself off from every grand view of nature, would shun the mountain and the ocean, and shut my eyes against the crimson sunset and the gemmed vault of night; for all these things would tell me what a solitary being I was, and how unsheltered—they would speak to me of a stupendous machinery beyond my control, of gigantic powers which I could not calculate, of material forces which my boasted intellect could neither comprehend nor modify. 3. In our domestic relations, we also deeply feel the need of a Father in heaven. How short-lived the family on earth! How frail the tie that here makes us one! O yes! we need the protecting providence and the regenerating spirit of our Father for the ground of immovable trust, at every stage of our domestic experience—else we might well resign our charge and remit our efforts, exclaiming in despair, "Who is sufficient for these things?" 4. Finally, as sinners, we need a Father in heaven. How often, my Christian friends, do our attainments fall short of our aims! How often are we betrayed into sudden sins of thought or speech! Under such experiences, we need to turn from our own frailty to our heart-seeing Father, with whom our witness is in heaven, our record on high. (*A. P. Peabody.*)

Adoniram Judson's conversion:—A new England student sets out on a tour through the Northern States. Before leaving home he avows himself an infidel. His father argues, his mother weeps. He can resist his father's arguments, but finds it more difficult to resist his mother's tears. Still he leaves home, resolved to see life, its dark side as well as its bright, having perfect confidence in his own self-control that it will protect him from anything mean and vicious. In the course of his travels he stops at a country inn. The landlord mentions, as he lights him to his room, that he has been obliged to place him next door to a young man who is probably in a dying state. The traveller passes a very restless night. Sounds come from the sick chamber—sometimes the movements of the watchers, sometimes the groans of the sufferer; but it is not these that disturb him. He thinks of what the landlord said—the stranger is probably in a dying state; and is he prepared? Alone, and in the dead of night, he feels a blush of shame steal over him at the question, for it proves the shallowness of his philosophy. What would his late companions say to his weakness. The clear-minded, intellectual, witty E——, what would he say to such consummate boyishness? But still his thoughts will revert to the sick man. Is he a Christian, calm and strong in the hope of a glorious immortality, or is he shuddering on the brink of a dark, unknown future? Perhaps he is a "Free-thinker" educated by Christian parents, and prayed over by a Christian mother. At last morning comes, and its light dispels what he would fain consider his "superstitious illusions." He goes in search of the landlord and inquires for his fellow-lodger. "He is dead." "Dead!" "Yes, he is gone, poor fellow!" "Do you know who he was?" "Oh! yes; he was a young man from Providence College, a very fine fellow; his name was E——." Our traveller is completely stunned. E——! E—— was his friend, the friend whose wit and raillery he dreaded, when he blushed at the thought of his own weakness during the wakeful night. And E—— was now dead. The traveller pursues his journey. But one single thought occupies his mind. The words dead! lost! lost! ring in his ears. Neither the pleasures nor the philosophies of the world can satisfy him now. The old resolution is virtually taken—"I will arise." He abandons his travels, and turns his horse's head homewards. His intellect does not readily accept the evidences of religion. But his moral nature is thoroughly aroused. And within a few months this young man surrenders his whole soul to Christ as his Saviour and Lord. This was Adoniram Judson, whose six-and-thirty years of unwearied devotion to missionary work have won for him the honourable appellation of the Apostle of Burmah. (*J. Kennedy, D.D.*)

The worldling arrested:—Christopher Anderson was an impulsive and fearless lad, averse to all hypocrisy and deception. One after another of his brothers was converted to God, and he was left companionless in his ungodly course. But till he could enjoy religion, he was determined to enjoy the world. Much of his time was spent in the country, and there he was a devotee to the music and dancing in rural fêtes. In town, where the ac-

companiments are less harmless, these gratifications were no less keenly sought after and indulged in. When about seventeen years of age he was sometimes alarmed at the course he was pursuing, and shuddered at the thought of where it must end; but he would not allow himself to think long enough on the subject, lest it should cost him those pleasures which he knew to be inconsistent with a godly life. But one evening, as he was returning home from a concert, he was suddenly and strangely impressed with a sense of the vanity of the world and its pleasures. There was no vision, nothing without, nothing within, on which the most critical could fasten a charge of fanaticism. But there was a profound conviction, suddenly awakened, as by the finger of God, that he was living the life of a fool, and that he must live it no longer. "I will arise," he said in effect. And he arose, and at once gave himself up to God. The transition from darkness to light, from the spirit of bondage to the spirit of adoption, was nearly instantaneous. In less than one hour he was conscious of the change. And the reality of the change was attested by a long life of unvarying constancy, and of service to God and man. (*Ibid.*) *Luther's awakening.*—Martin Luther was worldly, not after the merchant's fashion, but after the scholar's. He gave himself to study, and became a Doctor in Philosophy. He was not without thoughts of God, which haunted him and marred his happiness, but they were not sufficient to turn the current of his life. Among his college friends there was one, named Alexis, with whom he was very intimate. One morning a report was spread that Alexis had been assassinated. Luther hurried to the spot, and found the report was true. This sudden loss of his friend affected him deeply, and he asked himself, "What would become of me if I were thus suddenly called away?" Some months after he visited the home of his childhood, and on his return to the university he was within a short distance of Erfurt, when he was overtaken by a violent storm. The thunder roared; a thunderbolt sank into the ground at his side. Luther threw himself on his knees; his hour, he thought, was perhaps come; death, judgment, eternity, were before him in all their terrors, and spoke with a voice which he could no longer resist; encompassed with the anguish and terror of death, as he himself relates, he made a vow, if God would deliver him from this danger, to forsake the world, and devote himself entirely to His service. Risen from the earth, having still before his eyes that death which must one day overtake him, he could be worldly no longer, he must now be godly. His whole soul went into the resolution, "I will arise"; and arise he did with singleness and earnestness of purpose, nor lingered for one moment until he found himself sheltered in peace under the roof of his heavenly Father. (*Ibid.*) *A patchwork quilt.*—A good woman, whose son was in the army, made a patchwork quilt for the Soldiers' Hospital. In the white squares were texts of Scripture—every block had been prayed and wept over. Many poor fellows had laid under that quilt. In course of time a boy came; he was nearly senseless for more than a week. At last he was seen to kiss the patchwork quilt. It was thought he was wandering, or had found a text of hope or comfort. But no; it was a calico block, a little crimson leaf on a dark ground. He kept looking at it, tears in his eyes; he kissed it again, and asked, "Do you know where this quilt came from?" He was told a good woman had sent it, with a note pinned on to it. This they showed him at his request. His hand trembled, his cheek grew white, when he saw the writing. "Please read it to me very slowly," he said. It was read. "It is from my mother; that bit of calico was part of her dress." Afterwards he pointed out the text. "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight," and said, "I am no more worthy." The rest of the parable was read to him. A few days after he said, "I was a great way off; but God has met me, and had compassion on me; the Saviour's love fills me with peace." So the mother's prayers were answered, and her son saved. And he arose and came to his father. *Good resolutions must be acted upon.*—Conviction is the first step to reformation. If we suffer conviction to cool upon our minds, the force and spirit of it will soon decay and evaporate. In all living creatures, it may be observed, that at first the dawning and the beginning of life in them are very faint and hardly discernible. It is a small spark that just glimmers, and may easily be extinguished. But if it be cherished by heat and food, a wonderful alteration soon appears, and the little animal unfolds itself, and assumes its proper form. So it is in the first appearance of a spiritual life: there is a conviction and a resolution; and when that is exerted, a gradual reformation ensues. But the spiritual as well as the natural life is at first a tender thing, easily stopped, and hardly recovered. It concerns us, therefore, to cherish the

rising resolutions, and improve them into a suitable practice. It is to be supposed that there are few persons who, when they do evil, have not some conviction and remorse arising upon it, with an intention of amending and making peace with God some time or other; to-morrow, or in a few days, or before the last hours. But in this there is too often a fair appearance and no vital principle; it is a spark that shines in a moment and goes out; a forward blossom that is nipped by the frost and withers away. Such faint essays and weak resolutions only aggravate the sins committed against them; and by thus continuing to offend, not only peace of mind is lost, but it becomes more difficult either to make new resolutions, or to trust to them when they are made; and consequently to satisfy ourselves of the sincerity of such a repentance. And yet this is a matter of infinite moment, and our all depends upon it. The sooner it is performed, the better; and God hath promised to concur with us in the undertaking. If we arise and go to Him, He, like the father in the parable, will come forth to meet us. (*J. Jortin, D.D.*) *Act at once on your convictions*:—It is beyond my power to tell the importance of acting at once on your convictions. You will never attain to eminence without it. The pages of history are bright with the names, and the pathway of eminence is now crowded with men who added this to other qualities of mind—they carried out their purposes with a depth and power of resolution before which no ordinary considerations were permitted to stand. Take an instance. Nearly a hundred years ago, a young man from Peterborough entered Christ's College, Cambridge. His head was clear, but his manners clumsy, his time wasted, and his University privileges fast passing away in idleness. He had spent an evening at a party. At five o'clock next morning he was awakened by one of his companions standing at his bedside. "Paley," said he, "what a fool you are to waste your time this way! I could do nothing if I were to try; you could do anything. I have had no sleep with thinking about you. Now, I am come to tell you that, if you continue this idle life, I shall renounce your society." The admonition was not lost. That very day, the startled sluggard formed a new plan for life. He rose every morning at five; he continued at work till nine at night. He kept his resolution. His industry was unconquerable, his progress unrivalled, until, in the general examination, at the top of the list, as Senior Wrangler, stood the name of William Paley, whose varied writings on Christian Evidences have rendered the greatest service to the cause of truth. The whole success of your recovery, young man, hinges upon immediate decision. You must arise and go to your Father. Four-and-twenty hours' delay may utterly ruin your purpose. Oh, that every one here, that feels the relenings for past sin, would this night put his purpose into effect. (*W. B. Mackenzie, M.A.*) *The turning point*:—I. HERE WAS ACTION. He had passed beyond mere thought, mere regret, mere resolving; now "he arose." 1. This action of the prodigal was immediate, and without further parley. 2. The prodigal aroused himself, and put forth all his energies. II. HERE WAS A SOUL COMING INTO ACTUAL CONTACT WITH GOD. It would have been of no avail for him to have arisen, if he had not come to his father. Come to God; come just as you are, without merits or good works; trust in Jesus, and your sins will be forgiven you. III. IN THAT ACTION THERE WAS AN ENTIRE YIELDING UP OF HIMSELF. His proud independence and self-will were gone. He gave up all idea of self-justification. He yielded up himself so thoroughly that he owned his father's love to him to be an aggravation of his guilt. He also yielded up all his supposed rights and claims upon his father. And he made no terms or conditions. IV. IN THIS ACT THERE WAS A MEASURE OF FAITH IN HIS FATHER. Faith in his father's power, and in his readiness to pardon. V. THIS ACT OF COMING INTO CONTACT WITH GOD IS PERFORMED BY THE SINNER JUST AS HE IS. VI. THIS ACT WROUGHT THE GREATEST CONCEIVABLE CHANGE IN THE MAN. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) A great way off, his father saw him. *The penitent received*:—I. The love of God discerns the first motions of penitence in the heart of man. The prodigal "arose and came to his father," came, doubting and trembling, wondering, perhaps, how he would be received. Oh! how much better was his father than his fondest hopes imagined! And how much more gracious is God to the penitent than he could ever desire. II. And then, as He discerns the beginnings of penitence, so HE MAKES HASTE TO MEET THE PENITENT ON HIS WAY. There is a loving minuteness in the details of the story—in the setting forth of the father's acts, his words, his very emotions. It is the minuteness of love. Every sentiment of anger, every emotion of resentment, if they had ever been cherished, vanished in a moment. "His father saw him, and had compassion on him." He forgot his ingratitude, selfishness, insolence; or, if he remembered them, the remembrance was over-

powered by that which was far stronger, the sense of the penitent's need, the feeling that the needy one was his son. It is God in Christ who alone can bring this lesson home to ear and mind and heart, and fill our whole being with a sense of its truth. Jesus Christ speaking words of tenderest love and pity, performing acts of super-human power and mercy, weeping over sinful and doomed Jerusalem, agonizing on the cross for the salvation of a lost world, teaches us as no other has done the love of God for man, and convinces us powerfully that "His compassions fail not." III. And the immediate effect of this loving welcome which Almighty God accords to the penitent is at once to DEEPEN HIS PENITENCE AND TO RAISE HIS HOPES. It is a wonderful picture of the twofold power of the pardoning love of God. We do not cease to feel our sinfulness, we do not fail to confess our unworthiness, because we are assured of our reconciliation to God. The love of God has broken his heart and humbled him in his own eyes as no sense of sin and misery had done; but it has also raised him up again, and given him new and brighter hopes, and brought him into the "glorious liberty of the children of God." IV. Nor is it long before the seal is put upon the reconciliation which has been effected by THE GREAT AND BLESSED PRIVILEGES TO WHICH THE PENITENT IS INTRODUCED. The penitent is clothed in the robe of righteousness which was wrought for him by the Passion of our Lord. As the lost son receives the signet ring on his finger, so he is sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. He is shod, too, "with the preparation of the gospel of peace," so that he is now no longer a mere wanderer from the fold of God, erring and straying from Him like a lost sheep, but is able to go with his whole heart in the way of life, and is fitted for a course of earnest devotion and holy obedience. There is not a line in the whole glorious picture but has its counterpart in the love of God to the penitent sinner. And then there is a fulness of meaning in the last words of the joyful father, when he bids them kill the fatted calf, that they may eat and be merry, because the dead is alive and the lost is found. These words proclaim to us the double truth of the joy with which the grace of God fills the heart of the penitent when he has been adopted into the family of God, and of the ample provision which has been made for his wants in the kingdom of grace and glory. And now I have but two thoughts to urge upon you in conclusion. First, I would remind you that all these blessings belong only to those who truly repent: not to those who entertain some transient regrets. But my second closing word is one of encouragement—of encouragement to those who are weary of evil, and desirous of returning to God. You, my brethren, find it hard to believe that God will receive you willingly, and "heal your backsliding, and love you freely." Contemplate for a moment the teaching of this parable. He is saying to you, in the most convincing and affecting language, "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." "Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" I beseech you, therefore, by the love of God, that you will return to Him. He is more ready to receive you than you are to offer yourself to Him. (W. R. Clark, M.A.)

The prodigal's return:—I. First, then, what is the position signified by being "a great way off"? I must just notice what is not that position. It is not the position of the man who is careless and entirely regardless of God; for you notice that the prodigal is represented now as having come to himself, and as returning to his father's house. Once again, there is another person who is not intended by this description, namely, the very great man, the Pharisee who thinks himself extremely righteous, and has never learned to confess his sin. You, sir, in your apprehension, are not a great way off. You are so really in the sight of God; you are as far from Him as light from darkness, as the east is from the west; but you are not spoken of here. Your hope of self-salvation is a fallacy, and you are not addressed in the words of the text. It is the man who knows himself lost, but desires to be saved, who is here declared to be met by God, and received with affectionate embraces. And now we come to the question, Who is the man, and why is he said to be a great way off? For he seems to be very near the kingdom, now that he knows his need and is seeking the Saviour. I reply, in the first place, he is a great way off in his own apprehensions. Oh! poor heart; here is a comforting passage for thee: "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion on him." But again, there is a second sense in which some now present feel themselves to be far off from God. Conscience tells every man that if he would be saved he must get rid of his sin. Let me present you with one other aspect of our distance from God. You have read your Bibles, and you believe that faith alone can unite the soul to Christ. You feel that unless you can believe in Him who died upon the

cross for your sins, you can never see the kingdom of God; but you can say this morning, "Sir, I have striven to believe; I have searched the Scriptures, not hours, but days together, to find a promise upon which my weary foot might rest: I have been upon my knees many and many a time, earnestly supplicating a Divine blessing; but though I have pleaded, all in vain have I urged my plea, for until now no whisper have I had of grace, no token for good, no sign of mercy. Well, poor soul, thou art indeed far from God. I will repeat the words of the text to thee: "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion on him!"

II. Our second point is the PECULIAR TROUBLES which agitate the breasts of those who are in this position. There are yet many miles between him and his father whom he has neglected. Can you conceive his emotions when for the first time after so long an absence he sees the old house at home? He remembers it well in the distance; for though it is long since he trod its floors he has never ceased to recollect it; and the remembrance of his father's kindness, and of his own prosperity when he was with him, has never yet been erased from his consciousness. You would imagine that for one moment he feels a flash of joy, like some flash of lightning in the midst of the tempest, but anon a black darkness comes over his spirit. In the first place, it is probable he will think, "Oh! suppose I could reach my home, will my father receive me? Will he not shut the door in my face and tell me to begone and spend the rest of my life where I have been spending the first of it? Then another suggestion might arise: "Surely, the demon that led me first astray may lead me back again, before I salute my parent." "Or mayhap," thought he, "I may even die upon the road, and so before I have received my father's blessing my soul may stand before its God." I doubt not each of these three thoughts has crossed your mind if you are now in the position of one who is seeking Christ, but mourns to feel himself far away from Him. First, you have been afraid lest you should die before Christ has appeared to you. You have been for months seeking the Saviour without finding Him, and now the black thought comes, "And what if I should die with all these prayers unanswered? There was never a soul yet, that sincerely sought the Saviour, who perished before he found Him. No; the gates of death shall never shut on thee till the gates of grace have opened for thee. Your second fear is, "Ah, sir! I am not afraid of dying before I find Christ, I have a worse fear than that; I have had convictions before, and they have often passed away; my greatest fear to-day is, that these will be the same." I have heard of a poor collier, who on one occasion, having been deeply impressed under a sermon, was led to repent of sin and forsake his former life; but he felt so great a horror of ever returning to his former conversation, that one day he knelt down and cried thus unto God, "O Lord, let me die on this spot, rather than ever deny the religion which I have espoused, and turn back to my former conversation": and we are credibly told, that he died on that very spot, and so his prayer was answered. But the last and the most prominent thought which I suppose the prodigal would have, would be, that when he did get to his father, he would say to him, "Get along with you, I will have nothing more to do with you." Now, sinners, dry your tears; let hopeless sorrows cease; look to the wounds of Christ, who died; let all your griefs now be removed, there is no further cause for them: your Father loves you; He accepts and receives you to His heart.

III. Now, in conclusion, I may notice how THESE FEARS WERE MET IN THE PRODIGAL'S CASE, and how they shall be met in ours if we are in the same condition. The text says, "The Father saw him." Yes, and God saw thee just now. That tear which was wiped away so hastily—as if thou wast ashamed of it—God saw it, and He stored it in His bottle. That prayer which thou didst breathe just a few moments ago, so faintly, and with such little faith—God heard it. Sinner, let this be thy comfort, that God sees thee when thou beginnest to repent. He does not see thee with His usual gaze, with which He looks on all men; but He sees thee with an eye of intense interest. He has been looking on thee in all thy sin, and in all thy sorrow, hoping that thou wouldst repent; and now He sees the first gleam of grace, and He beholds it with joy. Never warder on the lonely castle top saw the first grey light of morning with more joy than that with which God beholds the first desire in thy heart. Never physician rejoiced more when he saw the first heaving of the lungs in one that was supposed to be dead, than God doth rejoice over thee, now that He sees the first token for good. And then, the text says, "He had compassion on him." Jehovah's bowels yearn to-day over you. He is not angry with you; His anger is passed away, and His hands are stretched out still. Nor did this prodigal's father stop in mere compassion. Having had compassion, "he ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed

him." This you do not understand yet; but you shall. As sure as God is God, if you this day are seeking Him aright through Christ, the day shall come when the kiss of full assurance shall be on your lip, when the arms of sovereign love shall embrace you, and you shall know it to be so. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The danger of trifling with convictions*.—A correspondent of the *New York Christian Advocate* furnishes the following affecting narrative:—"When I was travelling in the state of Massachusetts, twenty-six years ago, after preaching one evening in the town of —, a very serious-looking young man arose, and wished to address the assembly. After obtaining leave, he spoke as follows:—"My friends, about one year ago, I set out in company with a young man of my intimate acquaintance, to seek the salvation of my soul. For several weeks we went on together, we laboured together, and often renewed our covenant never to give over seeking till we obtained the religion of Jesus. But, all at once, the young man neglected attending meeting, appeared to turn his back on all the means of grace, and grew so shy of me, that I could scarcely get an opportunity to speak with him. His strange conduct gave me much painful anxiety of mind; but still I felt resolved to obtain the salvation of my soul, or perish, making the publican's plea. After a few days, a friend informed me that my young companion had received an invitation to attend a ball, and was determined to go. I went immediately to him, and, with tears in my eyes, endeavoured to persuade him to change his purpose, and to go with me on that evening to a prayer-meeting. I pleaded with him in vain. He told me, when we parted, that I must not give him up as lost, for after he had attended that ball, he intended to make a business of seeking religion. The appointed evening came, and he went to the ball, and I went to the prayer-meeting. Soon after the meeting opened, it pleased God, in answer to my prayer, to turn my spiritual captivity, and make my soul rejoice in His justifying love. Soon after the ball opened, my young friend was standing at the head of the ball-room, with the hand of a young lady in his hand, preparing to lead down the dance; and, while the musician was tuning his violin, without one moment's warning, the young man sallied back, and fell dead on the floor. I was immediately sent for, to assist in devising means to convey his remains to his father's house. You will be better able to judge what were the emotions of my heart, when I tell you that that young man was my own brother." Trifle not, then, with thy convictions, for eternity shall be too short for thee to utter thy lamentations over such trifling. (*Ibid.*) *The prodigal's father*.—I. THE FATHER'S EYESIGHT. He has seen all your frailties, all your struggles, all your disadvantages. He has not been looking at you with a critic's eye or a bailiff's eye, but with a Father's eye; and if a parent ever pitied a child, God pities you. You say: "Oh, I had so many evil surroundings when I started life." Your Father sees it. II. THE FATHER'S HASTE. He ran. No wonder. He didn't know but that the young man would change his mind and go back. He didn't know but that he would drop down from exhaustion. He did not know but something fatal might overtake him before he got up to the door-sill, and so the father ran. "When he was yet a great way off, his father ran." When the sinner starts for God, God starts for the sinner. God does not come out with a slow and hesitating pace; the infinite spaces slip beneath His feet, and He takes worlds at a bound. "The father ran!" III. THE FATHER'S KISS. Oh, this Father's kiss! There is so much meaning, and love, and compassion in it; so much pardon in it; so much heaven in it. I proclaim Him the Lord God, merciful, gracious, and long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth. Lest you would not believe Him, He goes up Golgotha, and while the rocks are rending, and the graves are opening, and the mobs are howling, and the sun is hiding, He dies for you. (De W. Talmage, D.D.) *The father's silence*.—We must not fail to observe the father's silence in reference to the confession. There is meaning in this. When a son is received in such circumstances, expressing his grief for the past, what he says is apt to give occasion for reproach, or, if a different spirit rule, the father is apt to go to the opposite extreme, and frame words of excuse. It is otherwise here. The father is silent, and that silence is Godlike. He receives the confession, for it is true, it is necessary; nothing can excuse the deeds, nothing can change the character of that awful past; but he does not dwell upon the painful subject, he does not open up the wound afresh. As he cannot say a word in excuse, he will not speak at all. His silence is condemnation. Thus God deals with man, maintaining a silence which is merciful. He casts the sins behind His back. "He giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not." (Prof. Calderwood.) *The return and the reception*.—I. THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN HOME. "He arose and came to his father." He did not spend his remaining strength either

in useless regrets, or in mere resolutions. "He arose and came." In coming to Christ we must not allow difficulties to discourage us. We may expect them; for, if we have lived in sin, we have lived at a great distance from Him; and the king of the "far country" does not like to lose a subject. There is cause for all this steadfastness of purpose. If you, who have been awakened, advance no farther, sin will quickly overtake you, and will bind the chains of habit still more closely around your soul. There is no safety but in going forward boldly and confessing Christ. Hasten! The cause of so many failures with those who attempt to walk in the "narrow path," is, that they attempt in their own strength. This brings us to—II. THE PRODIGAL'S RECEPTION. "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." That prince of story-tellers, Dr. Guthrie, tells of a young sailor's widow, who had parted with her husband after a few brief bright days of wedded bliss. He went to sea and never came back, his ship, probably foundering with all her crew, was never heard of again. When the time had arrived for her return, and she came not, this woman repaired to some bold headland and watched the white sails as they appeared on the blue waves, and at length as she saw vessels making for the harbour, hoped that one of them at least would bring her long-lost one home. At night on her lone bed she used to lie awake fancying she recognized his footstep, as some late traveller or midnight reveller wended his way home, but only to sink back on her pillow and weep away her disappointment as the footstep passed her door. And long after hope had died away in others' breasts, would she on her lonely bed, or on the headland close by, watch for the coming of him who never came home again. Love like this may have prompted the father of the prodigal to daily watch, with eager eye, the distant hill over which he saw his son go on that sad morning of his leaving home. When the prodigal was a great way off his father ran to meet him. The son walked; the father ran. (*W. G. Pascoe.*)

The prodigal's reception:—I. First, dear friends, THE CONDITION OF SUCH A SEEKER—HE IS YET A GREAT WAY OFF. He is a great way off if you consider one or two things. 1. Remember his want of strength. This poor young man had for some time been without food—brought so very low that the husks upon which the swine fed would have seemed a dainty to him if he could have eaten them. He is so hungry that he has become emaciated, and to him every mile has the weariness of leagues within it. So the sinner is a long way off from God when you consider his utter want of strength to come to God. 2. He is a great way off, again, if you consider his want of courage. He longs to see his father, but yet the probabilities are that if his father should come he would run away; the very sound of his father's footsteps would act upon him as they did on Adam in the garden—he would hide himself among the trees. His want of courage, therefore, makes the distance long, for every step hitherto has been taken as though into the jaws of death. 3. You are a great way off when we consider the difficulty of the way of repentance. John Bunyan tells us that Christian found, when he went back to the harbour after his lost roll, that it was very hard work going back. Every backslider finds it so, and every penitent sinner knows that there is a bitterness in mourning for sin comparable to the loss of an only son. 4. Let us look into this matter, and show that while the road seems long on this account it really is long if we view it in certain lights. (1) There are many seeking sinners who are a great way off in their life. (2) Again, you feel yourself a great way off as to knowledge. (3) In another point also many an earnest seeker is a great way off; I mean in his repentance. Great way off as you are, if the Lord pardons you, while yet callous and consciously hard of heart, will you not then fall at His feet and commend that great love wherewith He loved you, even when ye were dead in trespasses and sins? (4) Yes, but I think I hear one say, "There is another point in which I feel a great way off, for I have little or no faith. I have not the faith that I want; I am a great way off from it, and I fear that I shall never possess it." Yes, my brethren, I perceive your difficulty, for I have felt the sorrow of it myself; but oh! my Lord, who is the giver of faith, who is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins, can give you the faith you so much desire, and can cause you this morning to rest with perfect confidence upon the work which He has finished for you. II. Now consider THE MATCHLESS KINDNESS OF THE HEAVENLY FATHER. We must take each word and dwell upon it. First of all, we have here Divine observation. "When he was yet a great way off his father saw him." It is true he has always seen him. God sees the sinner in every state and in every position. The father does not turn away and try to forget him; he fixes his full gaze upon him.

Observe this was a loving observation, for it is written, "his father saw him." He did not see him as a mere casual observer; he did not note him as a man might note his friend's child with some pity and benevolence; but he marked him as a father alone can do. What a quick eye a parent hath! The next thought to be well considered is Divine compassion. "When he saw him he had compassion on him." Does not the word compassion mean suffering-with or fellow-suffering? What is compassion, then, but putting yourself into the place of the sufferer and feeling his grief? Notice and observe carefully the swiftness of this Divine love: "He ran." After noticing thus observation, compassion, and swiftness, do not forget the nearness: "He fell upon his neck and kissed him." Observe how near God comes to the sinner. It was said of that eminent saint and martyr, Bishop Hooper, that on one occasion a man in deep distress was allowed to go into his prison to tell his tale of conscience; but Bishop Hooper looked so sternly upon him, and addressed him so severely at first, that the poor soul ran away, and could not get comfort until he had sought out another minister of a gentler aspect. Now, Hooper really was a gracious and loving soul, but the sternness of his manner kept the penitent off. There is no such stern manner in our heavenly Father; he loves to receive His prodigals. When he comes there is no "Hold off!" no "Keep off!" to the sinner, but He falls upon his neck and He kisses him. In kissing his son the father recognizes relationship. He said with emphasis, "Thou art my son." Again, that kiss was the seal of forgiveness. He would not have kissed him if he had been angry with him; he forgave him, forgave him all. There was, moreover, something more than forgiveness; there was acceptance. In summing up, one may notice that this sinner, though he was a great way off, was not received to full pardon and to adoption and acceptance by a gradual process, but he was received at once. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The prodigal's return*.—It was about midnight in one of the suburbs of Edinburgh, and everything around seemed peaceful and quiet, when a young man, whose age could not be more than nineteen, cautiously advanced towards one of the few shops that were to be found in that neighbourhood. He seemed anxious to escape observation; for, although it was so late, there were still many persons passing to and from the city. He very soon effected an entrance into the shop in some way known to himself, and after he gained admittance, groped his way into a part of the shop with which he seemed well acquainted, and where he found some matches and a candle, which he soon lighted. Then, looking carefully around him, his eye lighted on a desk which stood at the further end of the counter. After trying it, he found that it was locked; but not to be defeated in his purpose, he got hold of some blunt instrument and forced the lock. In doing so he made a considerable noise, and before he could proceed further in his operations he heard a voice saying, "Who is there?" He began to tremble and show signs of fear, and before he had time to escape a door leading towards the back part of the premises was opened. A middle-aged woman with a light in her hand then appeared. The first object that attracted her attention was the young man, who stood as if he was riveted to the floor. She looked at him for a short time, and then said, "Oh, Willie, Willie, my poor boy, have you become so wicked as to rob your widowed mother? Willie, my boy, this will break my heart." "I cannot help it, mother," he replied, in a husky voice. "I must have money; and you can see by my clothes that I have deserted from my regiment." "I will tell you what to do," his mother said. "Go back to your regiment." "What! go back and be punished as a deserter!" he said, sullenly. "No, I will not. I will have this money that is in the desk; then I can get away to another country." As he spoke he lifted the lid of the desk and seized the bag which contained the money. While thus engaged his mother stepped towards him, and grasped him by the arm, as she said, pleadingly, "Willie, don't do this wicked thing; the money is of no value to me—it is your soul that I value. Come, say that you will not take it, and leave your mother." "Come, mother," he said, doggedly, "let go my arm"; but she still clung to him. Then with some violence he pushed her back into a chair, and the poor woman covered her face with her hands and wept bitterly. "Oh, Lord," she said, "save my poor boy." As he pushed his mother from him he made for the door with the money in his possession, but when he reached the door he looked back, and saw his mother sobbing as her whole frame shook with emotion. He stood for a moment undecided what to do; then, throwing back the money on the counter, he put his arms round his mother's neck. "Mother," he said, "I will not leave you; I will go back to my regiment to-morrow." The following morning Willie gave himself up to the mili-

tary authorities as a deserter, was tried by court-martial, and punished. Shortly afterwards he became seriously ill, and was sent to the Military Hospital at Edinburgh, where I first met him. The Lord blessed the Word to his soul, so that when he was discharged a short time afterwards he returned to his mother's house a believer in the Lord Jesus and a new man. A short time after his discharge he got married to a Christian young woman, and in a few weeks afterwards both of them sailed for Australia, where his voice has often been heard preaching Christ to perishing sinners, both in the public parks and in the streets of the city of Melbourne. Before he left, he said to me, "I am sorry to leave you, J—, but take this Bible and keep it for my sake; it is the Bible my dear father gave me, and I value it above almost anything I possess. Keep it for my sake, and visit my mother, for she loves you as myself; and if we never meet on earth again, let us both so live here that we may meet 'where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.'" (*Notes from a Soldier's Diary.*)

The return of the banished.—Some people once lived in a happy isle, but for their misdeeds were banished. The place of their exile, however, lay within sight of their former home. They could look across the channel and discern the beach, with its border of golden sand, and the hills beyond, with their emerald slopes and cool snow-capped summits. Occasionally, too, in the stiller weather, they could hear voices from that land: the shout of happy playmates, the tinkling tune of browsing flocks, or the mellow peal summoning to welcome worship. Their own was a land of emptiness. From the brackish bog sprouted a few dingy weeds, and the glairy stems, or mallows among the bushes, were the food of the gaunt inhabitants. Few had any desire to leave, or any hope of bettering their condition. One exception we may notice. He was a thoughtful character. With those deep, melancholy eyes, which take so much for granted, and which seldom kindle to the fullest—for they have looked the world through and through, and seen an end of all perfection—glimpses of a noble soul could at times be caught as it climbed to the window of his wan and wistful countenance. Many an eager glance did he direct towards the blessed isle. Fain would he reach it. One morning, on waking, it struck him that the opposite coast was unusually near. So low was the tide that perhaps he might ford it, or at all events swim. So down through the swamp and over the dry shingle he posted; and then across the sad and solid sand, off which the gentle wavelets had folded, right athwart the wet stones and crackling fuci, where tiny streams of laggard water and crustaceans tumbling topsy-turvy in their crawling haste were trying to overtake the ocean, till abruptly met by the rising tide, he found to his dismay that, deep as was the ebb, the channel still was deeper. Disappointed here, he by and by bethought him of another plan. Westward of his dwelling the coast-line stretched away in successive cliffs and headlands, till it ended in a lofty promontory, which in its turn seemed to abut against the happy isle. Thither he made up his mind that he would take a pilgrimage. With slopes and swells, zigzags and windings, it turned out much farther than it looked; and when at last, footsore and staggering, he got to the summit, instead of a bridge to the better land, he found it a dizzy cliff, with the same relentless ocean weltering at its base. Baulked in this final effort, he went down and flung himself on the rocks and wept. It was during this paroxysm of vexation that, looking up, he noticed a little boat, with whose appearance he was familiar. He was a little surprised to see it there, for he remembered that it used to ride exactly opposite his own habitation, although, belonging to no one in particular, and not having brought any of the commodities they cared for, he and the other inhabitants had never paid it much attention. Having now nothing else to do, he looked at it eagerly and somewhat wonderingly. It neared him. It came close up to the rocks where he was seated. It was a beautiful boat, with snowy sail and golden prow, and a red pennon flying. There was one on board, and only one. His raiment was bright and glistening, and his features were such as could only have come from the happy isle. "Son of man," he said, "why weepest thou?" "Because I cannot reach yonder blessed region." "Couldst thou trust thyself to me?" The pilgrim looked, first at the little skiff, and then at its benignant pilot, and said, "I can." With that timid "yes" he stepped on board, and like a sunbeam, so swift, it bore him away from that dismal coast; and ere he could believe it he was a denizen of the happy isle, breathing its immortal air; at home amidst its loveliness, and numbered with its citizens. The happy isle is peace with God—the blessed state which men when sinless occupied. The dreary land is the state of alienation from the living God, in which, with joyless acquiescence, so many are living. And the little skiff—the only means of passing over

from the one region to the other—is the atonement, the intercession of Jesus Christ. (*James Hamilton, D.D.*) “My father will meet me”:—A friend got into a railway carriage in Liverpool to go far north in Scotland, and there sat beside him a pale, weak, worn young mother, and she had upon the bend of her arm a strong but restless babe. Surely, he thought, this mother is not able to carry this child all these hundreds of miles. After a little he put the question to her, “Are you going far?” “I am.” “Are you going to carry that child all the way?” “Yes, I am.” “Will you not get tired? You look tired now.” “I am not well, and I am tired, and I do feel that it is a long way to go; but oh!”—and the tears stole down her cheek—“I do not mind, for my father will meet me there.” Ah! beloved, thou mayest have many a load to carry, many a sin to weep over, many a long and weary day in life’s journey, and but little strength, little to solace or comfort; but never mind, you are going home, to die no more, and your Father will meet you at the journey’s end. *Conversion not necessarily a protracted process*:—When we read of the prodigal being a great way off, and so are led to think of his return as a long and toilsome journey, we are not to suppose that conversion is necessarily a protracted process. The coming back, of course, in the parable, must correspond to the departure into the far land; and though frequently there is a considerable time of anxiety and struggle between the moment of awakening and the time when the soul finds joy and peace in believing, yet this dark middle-passage is by no means essential. Rather it is the result either of faulty views as to the way of salvation, or of a want of faith in it as it is presented to the sinner. On this point I cannot refrain from reproducing an anecdote which I heard one evening in conversation from the lips of Mr. Spurgeon. An earnest young evangelist was one morning on his way from Granton to Edinburgh, and overtook a Newhaven fishwife carrying her burden to the market. Anxious to do some good, he said to her, “There you go with your burden on your back. Once I had a heavier load than that, but, thank God, I have got rid of it now.” “Oh,” she replied, “you mean the burden that John Bunyan speaks of; I know all about that; but I have got rid of mine many and many a year ago. I am happy to hear of it,” said the evangelist. “Yes,” she answered; “but, do you know, I don’t think that man Evangelist was a right preacher of the gospel at all. When Christian asked him where he was to go, he said, Do you see yonder wicket-gate? He said he didn’t; and it was no wonder. He asked again, Do you see yonder shining light? and he said he did; and then Evangelist directed him to make for that. Now, what business had he to speak either about the shining light or the wicket-gate? Couldn’t he have pointed him at once to the Redeemer’s cross. Christian never did lose his burden till he saw that cross; and he might have seen it sooner if Evangelist had known his business better. Much good he got, too, by making for the shining light. Why, before he knew where he was, he was floundering in the Slough of Despond; and if it had not been for the man Help he would never have got out.” “What!” said the evangelist to her, “were you never in the Slough of Despond?” “Ay, many a time, many a time,” was the reply; “but let me tell you, young man, it’s a hantel easier to get through that slough with your burden off than with your burden on!” Now, though as a record of what often actually happens, the immortal allegorist has given us a truthful portraiture, the Christian fishwife was in the right; for the moment a sinner rightly apprehends and thoroughly believes the doctrine of the Cross he loses his sin-burden; and this may be after no painfully protracted process of agony and inward conflict. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *The father’s readiness to forgive*:—As the father in the parable ran to meet the returning prodigal, so the Lord, while slow to condemn, makes haste to forgive. Some time ago a devoted Christian worker in Edinburgh, finding a young woman—one of the fallen—in rapid decline, earnestly entreated her to go back to her home. “No,” she said, “I cannot; my parents would never receive me.” Her Christian friend knew what a mother’s heart was, so she sat down and wrote a letter to the mother, telling her that she had met her daughter, who was deeply grieved, and wanted to return. The next post brought an answer back, and money along with it for the journey, and on the envelope was written, “Immediately! immediately!” That was a mother’s heart; she fully forgave, and desired the earliest possible return. This is what the great and loving God is saying to every wandering sinner: “Come immediately.” Yes, backsliders, you cannot come home too soon; for He will forgive you graciously and love you freely, and in heaven there will be joy unspeakable over your return. *The Father’s joy at the sinner’s return*:—This infinite joy in

the Father's heart seems to us appalling when we read of it, and try to believe that it is an actual revelation of the Divine mind. It is high—we cannot attain unto it; that is our natural language. And yet all Christendom is but an expression of this truth. What does the message of Christ's full and perfect sacrifice mean—what do the sacraments mean—if it is not this? Are they not manifestations of One who of His tender love to mankind gave His only begotten Son to take our nature upon Him, and to suffer death upon the cross. Passion Week is either a dream or it is a translation into fact of this parable. It is a witness that the parable applies equally to both the sons of the Father—to those who are near and to those who are afar off. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*)

And the son said unto him, Father. — Confession and restoration:—I. THE PRODIGAL'S CONFESSION. 1. This confession was the result of repentance. 2. This confession of the prodigal showed that his repentance was real. "Father, I have sinned." There was nothing fictitious about that confession. It was the welling up of a bursting heart, too full of sadness, too conscious of error, too desirous of forgiveness to think of an excuse, or to say anything but the simple truth—"I have sinned." It is a beautiful confession, when, coming from the lips of a truly earnest man, it is whispered into the ear of God. 3. This confession of the prodigal showed that his repentance was evangelical. "I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight." The earthly aspect of the sin he saw in all its vileness; but when he turned his eyes towards heaven, he felt that God had been more bitterly sinned against. 4. This confession of the prodigal was humble—"And am no more worthy to be called thy son." He did not say that he was humble; true humility never does this; but he showed it. **II. THE PRODIGAL'S RESTORATION.** 1. The prodigal was restored to honour. "The best robe." 2. He is restored to dignity. Ring on finger. 3. He is restored to comfort and strength. Shoes on feet. 4. He is restored to abundant provision. Fatted calf. (*W. G. Pascoe.*)

Bring forth the best robe.—The best robe:—I. The sinner by nature is SPIRITUALLY NAKED. Prodigal in rags. **II. A SUITABLE ROBE** has been graciously prepared. Not "go and prepare one," but "bring it forth." **III. It is of UNPARALLELED BEAUTY AND VALUE.** "The best robe." Its beauty indescribable. Its beauty never fades. Purchased for us by a great price; but no price is asked from us. An invulnerable robe; clothed in it we have nothing to fear. **IV. It is brought to us and PUT UPON US BY APPOINTED AGENCY.** **V. It is the FATHER'S GIFT.** **VI. Bestowed upon none but the SINCERELY PENITENT.** (*J. Dobie, D.D.*) *The best robe:—*The best robe is the "garment of salvation," or the "robe of righteousness," which God puts upon every one who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. 1. It is the best robe, because it cost so much labour to make it. 2. It is the best robe, because becoming to all persons. 3. The excellence of this robe is seen in its suitableness for all occasions. 4. It is the best robe, because it wears so well. 5. Because it costs so little. The poorest person and the greatest sinner may have it for nothing. 6. Because it is the robe we shall wear in heaven. It will be our "court dress." (*D. Winters.*) *The best robe:—*By the best robe we may scripturally understand what theologians and preachers have all along designated "the robe of righteousness." It covers at once and completely the rags and unseemliness of sin. It was woven on Calvary for the race of man, out of the white warp of Divine mercy and the blood-red woof of the Redeemer's sacrifice. It is like Christ's own garment for which lots were cast, "without seam, woven from the top throughout," and of which, when He was stripped by His executioners, He was significantly arrayed in the "scarlet robe," emblematical of our crimson transgressions which He bore. This robe of righteousness has been hung up in heaven's gospel-wardrobe, "and is unto all and upon all them that believe." It is beautifully bedecked with the ornaments of holiness, which the Spirit of Christ, with delicate hand, has embroidered on its indestructible texture. An affecting anecdote has been preserved concerning the work of God in Jamaica, before our slaves were set free. Although Britain had not liberated them, God's Spirit often broke their spiritual chains; and the joy of salvation visited black and white alike. Once, at a certain plantation, a slave had entered into the peace of the gospel, while his master still remained in darkness; and the black freedman thus addressed the white bondman, who had not yet got rid of the galling chains of sin and Satan. "You see, Massa, it just like this. A gentleman pass our house one day and he offer two robe for notink—one to you and one to me. Me poor negro—very poor—got no good clothes—very glad to get robe for de taking. But you rich man—hab plenty better robe ob your own—you too proud to take de kind man's robe. Jest so,

Massa, wid de gospel. De Lord Jesus Christ is passing by our plantation wid robe ob righteousness for poor sinners. Me poor sinful negro—black skin—black sin—very glad to get de robe dat was woven on de tree; but you go great deal to church—gib much money—hab minister many time in your house—tink yourself very good Christian—not willing to take de robe as a free gift. O Massa, be persuade to be poor in spirit like poor negro, and take de robe ob righteousness as a free gift.” (*F. Ferguson, D.D.*) *The ring*:—It is a conscience-keeping ring. I cannot explain my meaning here without narrating one of those Arabian tales in which a deep meaning is often found hidden. A genius or guardian spirit presented to his *protege* a ring, which had this virtue, that whenever the wearer went against the wishes of his protector, it tightened upon his finger and gave him pain. Beautiful emblem of the new heart and tender conscience which God’s grace brings to the penitent and believing soul! That is the magic ornament which the returning prodigal receives when his father dresses him for the feast, and which unspeakably exceeds in value the rarest jewels that sparkle on the brow, the neck, or hand of haughty beauty. (*J. Ferguson.*) *A father’s pity and love*:—A preacher one day wound up his sermon by saying that there was not a man in London so far gone but he could be saved. Next morning a young lady—a tract distributor—requested an interview, and repeated his words. “Do you mean it?” “I do.” “Well, there is a man down in the East End of London who says there is no hope for him. I wish you would go and see him.” He went down into one of those dark alleys till he came to a miserable-looking building. And up in the fifth storey he found the young man, mangled and bruised by the effects of sin. The minister talked to him and told him of the sinner’s Friend, and prayed with him until at last light began to break into his soul, and he was able to say, “I could die happy if I could hear my father say, ‘I forgive you.’ He lives in the West End of London, but he has had my name taken out of the family records. He treats me as if I were dead.” “I will go and see him,” said the minister. He found his abode—a beautiful mansion—rang the bell, and was answered by a servant in livery. He inquired if his master was in, and presently the man came down. “I believe you have a son called Joseph?” “No,” he said, “I have no boy of that name. I had, but I have disinherited him. There is nothing good about him.” “But,” said the minister, “he is your boy, nevertheless.” “Is my Joseph sick?” “Yes, he is at the point of death. I ask you if you will forgive him. If you will, he can die in peace. Tell me that you forgive him, and I will take the message to him.” “No, no; if my boy is sick, I will go and see him.” And so the carriage was taken out, and they went to the dark alley in the East End. The father hardly recognized him. The boy said, “Father, can you forgive me?” “Oh, Joseph, I would have forgiven you long ago, if I had known you wanted me to. Let my servants take you and put you in the carriage.” “No, father, I am not well enough to be moved. I shall not live much longer, but I can die happy now.” And soon he passed away to meet his Lord and Saviour. Let us eat, and be merry.—*Joy on the prodigal’s return*:—I. THE NEW CONVERT’S JOY. You have seen, perhaps, a man running for his temporal liberty, and the officers of the law after him, and you saw him escape, or afterward you hear the judge had pardoned him, and how great was the glee of that rescued man; but it is a very tame thing that compared with the running for one’s everlasting life, the terrors of the law after him, and Christ coming in to pardon and bless and rescue and save. You remember John Bunyan in his great story tells how the pilgrim put his fingers in his ears, and ran, crying: “Life, life, eternal life!” A poor car-driver in this city, some months ago, after struggling for years to support his family, suddenly was informed that a large inheritance was his, and there was a joy amounting to bewilderment; but that is a small thing compared with the experience of one when he has put in his hands the title-deeds to the joys, the raptures, the splendours of heaven, and he can truly say, “Its mansions are mine, its temples are mine, its songs are mine, its God is mine!” Oh, it is no tame thing to become a Christian. It is a merry-making. It is the killing of the fatted calf. It is a jubilee. II. THE FATHER’S JOY. At the opening of the Exposition in New Orleans I saw a Mexican flutist, and he played the solo, and then afterward the eight or ten bands of music, accompanied by the great organ, came in; but the sound of that one flute as compared with all the orchestras was greater than all the combined joy of the universe when compared with the resounding heart of Almighty God. III. THE JOY OF THE MINISTERS OF RELIGION. They blew the trumpet, and ought they not to be glad of the gathering of the host? They pointed to the full supply, and ought they not to rejoice when thirsty

souls plunge as the hart for the water brooks? They came forth, saying: "All things are now ready"—ought they not to rejoice when the prodigal sits down at the banquet? IV. THE JOY OF ALL EARNEST CHRISTIANS. V. THE JOY OF THE INHABITANTS OF HEAVEN. (*De W. Talmage, D.D.*) *The merry household*:—I. THE OCCASION OF THIS MIRTH. It was the restoration of the prodigal son. II. THE PARTICIPATORS IN THIS MIRTH. 1. The father took part in this mirth. But for him, indeed, there had been no merry-making. And in that happy party there was none so happy as the father! 2. The servants took part in this mirth. They rejoiced in sympathy with their master. "They say that if a piano is struck in a room where another stands unopened and untouched, he who lays his ear to the latter will hear a string within, as if touched by the hand of a shadowy spirit, sounding the same tone. But how far more strange that the strings of the heart vibrate to those of another." Joy meets joy, feeling meets feeling. The rapturous gladness of the father is caught, and like two torches blended, heightened by the servants as they crowd the hall, and with music and dancing begin to be merry. When a sinner is converted to God the sympathy of all holy beings is with him. 3. The prodigal himself took part in this mirth. He had the greatest cause of all to do so. Had he not been rescued from a misery worse than death—the misery of a sinful life? Had he not been restored to all the honours he had originally possessed? Oh! the blessedness of that hour when God first whispered forgiveness to our heart. III. THE EFFECT OF THIS MIRTH. It would establish the prodigal in his new mode of life. (*W. G. Pascoe.*) *The safety of moral return*:—Christmas Evans was once describing the prodigal's coming back to his father's house, and he said that when the prodigal sat at the father's table his father put upon his plate all the daintiest bits of meat that he could find; but the son sat there and did not eat, and every now and then the tears began to flow. His father turned to him and said, "My dear son, why are you unhappy? You spoil the feasting. Do you not know that I love you? Have I not joyfully received you?" "Yes," he said, "dear father, you are very kind, but have you really forgiven me? Have you forgiven me altogether, so that you will never be angry with me for all I have done?" His father looked on him with ineffable love and said, "I have blotted out thy sins and thy iniquities, and will remember them no more for ever. Eat, my dear son." The father turned round and waited on the guests, but by and by his eyes were on his boy, they could not be long removed. There was the son weeping again, but not eating. "Come, dear child," said his father, "come, why are you still mourning? What is it that you want?" Bursting into a flood of tears a second time, the son said, "Father, am I always to stop here? Will you never turn me out of doors?" The father replied, "No, my child, thou shalt go no more out for ever, for a son abides for ever." Still the son did not enjoy the banquet; there was still something ranking within, and again he wept. Then his father said, "Now, tell me, tell me, my dear son, all that is in thy heart. What do you desire more?" The son answered, "Father, will you make me stop here? Father, I am afraid lest, if I were left to myself, I might play the prodigal again. Oh, constrain me to stay here for ever!" The father said, "I will put my fear in thy heart, and thou shalt not depart from me." "Ah! then," the son replied, "it is enough," and merrily he feasted with the rest. So I preach to you just this—that the great Father, when He takes you to Himself, will never let you go away from Him again. Whatever your condition, if you trust your soul to Jesus, you shall be saved, and saved for ever. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Heavenly merry-makings*:—It is now his turn to act the prodigal in lavishing all upon the penitent. Little wonder that the elder brother reproached the father as the greater prodigal of the two. Such a costly merry-making had never been in their quiet home. The prodigality of grace surpasses the prodigality of sin. The best robe, the ring, and the shoes were the dress of a free-born son, and showed to all that the lost son had received the highest favours the father could bestow. "The fatted calf" was well known to the servants, as at Jewish farms a calf was fattened for great festivals. "And they began to be merry" (ver. 24), but we are not told when they ended. Heaven has its merry-makings as well as earth, and they celebrate the prodigal's home-coming. (*J. Wells.*) *His elder son*.—The elder son:—The elder son was one who had always remained at that very home from which the younger had wandered, and to which he had at last returned. He had been a faithful son, doing his father's commandments, and the parable would lose all its point, unless we were to see in it a picture of a father's heart which has depth and warmth enough not only to love a son who obeys, but to forgive a son who disobeys and repents. The elder son was not

therefore a self-righteous Pharisee. He was not a hypocrite. But he was a somewhat narrow good man. He was a type of thousands among the Jews, and of thousands still among Christians, who look with jealous suspicion upon all who have been once abandoned and now have repented and turned to God. They have never fathomed the depths of sin. From their childhood they have walked uprightly. I. In the first place we may see that THE POSITION OF THE ELDER SON IS PREFERABLE TO THAT OF THE YOUNGER BECAUSE OF THE RISK HE ESCAPED. It is true that the younger son returned, but then he might not have returned. When he turned his back upon his father's house, it might have been for ever. II. The position of the elder brother is preferable BECAUSE A LIFE OF CONTINUOUS GODLINESS IS FAR EASIER THAN A LIFE OF GODLINESS SUCCEEDING A LIFE OF SIN. The prodigal, remember, does not start life afresh. He is not brought back to the point of innocence from which he started. His soul is not cleared and cleansed from all the past. If he be able to exercise a fair command over his speech and outward conduct, so as not to break out into the words and deeds of his profligate career, think how his memory and his imagination are poisoned! He has to undo so much that has been done. He has to strive hard to break the links of association which connect him with evil thoughts. What would he not sacrifice if he could but just wipe out of his remembrance the tormenting, polluting past. But he cannot. Though it be forgiven by God, it is there still to be struggled with. He has to pull down much that he has built up; he has to tear up much that he has planted; he has to put a double watch at those points where he so often fell; he often feels the old sin reviving and struggling for mastery again, and trembles lest he should be vanquished. Whereas the son who has remained at home has grown up into godliness with his advancing years. III. Viewed as a whole, THE LIFE OF THE SON WHO REMAINED AT HOME MUST YIELD FAR MORE PLEASURE TO GOD THAN THE LIFE OF THE SON WHO WANDERS AND THEN RETURNS. Let experience be called in to testify which is preferable, the joy which a parent has over a son who is obedient and virtuous, who never sets at nought the laws of the house, whose ear is ever ready to hear and hands to do the will of his father, the serene joy which is felt every day and all the day, the joy which is like quiet and peaceful sunshine, or that tumultuous gladness which, after years of pain and sorrow over a son's profligacy, welcomes him home. Let any parent on earth who has the well-being of his children at heart answer, and he will say, Give me the obedient, loving son, with the quiet tranquil joy from day to day, before the brief ecstasy after long agony, which arises from a repenting prodigal. The one is but a mountain torrent—the other is a deep and noiseless stream. And as with the parent so too with the children; the joy of the obedient one is higher than that of the returning one. It may not seem so, because of the feast which the returning one sees provided for him. The merriment will cease. The fatted calf will not be killed again to-morrow. Even the prodigal's joy will sober down after a while, and he will have to find a sweeter banquet, though a less exciting one, in doing the will of his father. (*E. Mellor, D.D.*) *The prodigal's elder brother:—*1. The first point which we have to consider is, that the elder could not rejoice, on account of jealousy, in the return of his younger brother. That such a character should take no delight in welcoming one of his own blood from habits which were leading him to inevitable ruin is a most humiliating proof that "every man at his best estate is altogether vanity." Nor can we suppose that our Lord intends us to regard this character as an exception to the general rule; quite the reverse. We may find in this elder brother our own likeness. There is scarcely a fault more common than this very jealousy and grudging of good to others. In proof of this, a sceptical philosopher, whose wisdom we may suppose was not drawn from the sacred page, but from his own observation, has sneeringly affirmed that we rejoice in the misfortunes of our friends; and, though we may hope this is not universally true, it certainly requires much more Christian charity than most of us possess to rejoice from the heart in our neighbour's good fortune. 2. The second remarkable point in the character of the elder brother is, that he set a value and merit upon his own decent behaviour. Now nothing can be more fatal to a right view of our position towards God than to suppose that any merit can attach to our obedience; or that it would be less incumbent upon us to obey were all prospective recompense removed! The only sound reason why we should ever live well is that God has commanded it—the only motive which can effectually influence our conduct is love for Him. The conclusion to be drawn from this brief consideration of the elder brother's character is what I have already summed up in the early part of my discourse. 1. In the first place, his past respectable domestic conduct could not have

been the fruits of genuine good affections. Throughout the parable there is not the faintest trace of affection for any one but himself. 2. Secondly, it is evident that, however good his life may have been, his real taste was not for holiness and what is right. The mere fact that he could not take delight in the reformation of his brother is sufficient to prove this. 3. Finally, the many years' service of which the elder brother boasted had not been given out of love to his parent: if he had not been watching from time to time for instances of parental indulgence, he could at any rate feel they were his due—"Long as I have served thee thou never gavest me a kid!" Thus did want of real love for his father unamiably show itself, hidden probably alike from himself and others until circumstances arose to develop it. Such a deficiency strikes at once all remaining interest from his character; and stained in sin as the prodigal had been, still, in his remnant of good affections, we trace how Divine grace operates more easily, and conquers more effectually, when it has to combat the vices of youthful excess, than when it has to contend with decent formalism, a hard and cold heart, a jealous temper, self-righteousness, and conceit. (*A. Gatty, D.D.*)

The elder son :—It was a joyless life, that of the old son. While his dull round of duty lacked the colour and merriment of the prodigal's gay time, it found no compensation from any sympathy of affection betwixt himself and his father. They were men of very different characters. The father's heart yearned incessantly after his lost boy; but this worker in the field wasted no love on him. Alone or with the labourers he wrought; and his chief intercourse with his father was when he took his orders. Hear his own account of it: "These many years do I slave to thee, nor did I transgress at any time thy command." To be a bondservant, that was his chosen place; to have wilfully disobeyed no injunction, that was his boast. Yet he had friends elsewhere who were not his father's friends, and desires after other company than met at his father's table; for, had he earned any pleasure by his toil, it would have been, he says, a kid with which to make merry with his own companions. Even this he did not get. It was thankless service. No glow of family love warmed it. Yet, if not quite satisfied, the old son was in a measure content to hold this unsonlike place, just because his cold heart had never dreamed that sonship meant anything more than this. The problem was, how to teach him that; how to open up what tenderness the heart of his father held, and what the claim of a son really meant, so that he shall discover that he for one has never yet entered into the joy of that relationship, nor known what is the deep confidential love which binds true parent and true child in one. What, then, does sonship really mean? It means that there is more sacred strength in that single word "son" than in ever so many years of laborious servitude; for it is the power of love and not of law which says, "All that I have is thine." It means that this Father of yours, whom you have been observing as a taskmaster, and misjudging as a niggard, you have never really known in His Fatherhood; for see, to this scapegrace, just because he is become again a son indeed, and dares to trust the father's heart, that father's heart brims over instantly with unutterable tenderness and a generosity that knows no bounds. Oh, it means, if you will learn it, that you have been as little of a true son as this pitied outcast; else might you also have rejoiced all through these weary years past, in a love no less strong, in a joy no less deep, than the love and joy of this festive day; nay, more deep and strong, if less noisy or exuberant, because springing out of the calm depths of an unbroken intercourse, unmarred by the memory of separation or the shadow of guilt; for "Thou art ever with me"! (*J. O. Dykes, D.D.*)

The elder brother :—The aim of every Christian is to be complete in Christ; but how many of His own are poor in the possession of His sympathies, His generosity and meekness, His large views? Let us see how these are represented by the elder brother, and show how our Father in heaven deals with the errors of such a disposition. I. THE SOURCES OF IMPERFECTION IN THIS CHARACTER. 1. Wrong views of the character of God. This man had not sufficient trust in the integrity and goodness of his father. 2. Wrong views of the nature of religious service. This elder brother considered the service of his father as legal and constrained. The child of God ought to have a feeling of possession in the property of his Father, serving Him as a son who is native to the inheritance. 3. Wrong feeling towards the objects of the Divine mercy. To mention the evils of his brother's life, at such a time as this, was bad taste, and worse feeling. He might have trusted the honest affection of his father, and waited till his own soul rose to that high eminence. That feeling which refuses to recognize a man as one of the family of God, because he has greatly sinned, is a bad feeling. II. THE DIVINE REMEDY. The same love which received

the prodigal home now argues with the narrow-minded saint. That love is great to cover faults, and to develop the most unpromising germs of goodness. It is not expended in the single effort of forgiveness, but has reserves of force to transform, purify, and elevate. There are souls within the kingdom of God who are not fully in sympathy with the greatness of the Divine love. There are surfaces on which, when the light falls, some of the rays are quenched, and the reflection is imperfect. There are some souls who fail to reflect the full splendour of the love of God. What we know of this heavenly principle depends upon what we are able to receive. 1. The first remedy for this state of mind is to impress us with the sacredness and worth of true feeling. There is a logic of the heart which no sophistry can invade or dissipate. Let us follow those impulses of the Divine love within us, though we cannot now mark out by our reason the whole journey. At what time the mind disposes to unbelief, the heart can restore us to faith. 2. Another remedy is—We are reminded that God's resources are infinite. Lavish bounty of design and provision is the rule of nature. How grudging and narrow is man! How good is God! 3. We are reminded that constancy of service is superior to sudden rapture. (*The Lay Preacher.*)

He was angry.—*The angry brother* :—I. THE WANT OF SYMPATHY WITH A BROTHER'S CONVERSION. The prodigal's brother is "angry and will not go in." Angry at what? The salvation of a brother! The reception of the lost one home again! No true saint will look coldly on a poor sinner who staggers to the mercy-seat.

II. SELFISHNESS PASSING CENSURE ON CAUSES FOR GLADNESS. Selfishness is a fire that burns all love out of the soul. Selfishness is an angry beast whose iron hoof crushes every flower in the garden of sympathy. Selfishness is a monster that has no eye for the beautiful, no ear for music, no appreciation of poetry or sentiment. Selfishness is a lean-souled miser who would snatch a crust from the hand of a beggar, and would begrudge hospitality to a starving wanderer.

III. ANGER SHUTTING OUT FROM A FEAST OF JOY. "He was angry and would not go in." (*W. G. Pascoe.*) *The elder son's dissatisfaction* :—How plausible this reasoning sounds! How perfectly invincible it must have seemed to this dutiful son! And yet, if we examine it, what does it come to but this? "I have been obedient, and I ought to be paid for my obedience. My brother has been disobedient. Why art thou glad that he has ceased to be disobedient? I see no cause for satisfaction in that. It causes me no delight." Here is that flagrant opposition between the Divine purpose and the purpose of those who had been called to be the ministers of His will and purpose, which our Lord has been detecting in all His dealings with the scribes and Pharisees? "The Father's joy is in the restoration of the lost. You have no such joy. You think the removal of their curse, of their sin, is an injury to you." But is this consistent with the words, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." Thoroughly consistent. For what do these words signify but this: "Son, I have called thee to know my goodness and loving-kindness. I have called thee to be a dispenser of that knowledge to the children of men. I can give thee no greater treasure. I can make thee partaker of no higher bliss than my own. Thou wilt not have that? Thou wishest for another kind of joy than mine? Well, if thou chooseth it, thou must have it. Thou must try what that selfish joy is worth; whether it satisfies thee better than the husks which the swine eat have satisfied thy brother. But before thou formest that terrible resolution, I will come out and entreat thee. I will urge thee to partake of my festival. I will vindicate thy right to it. I will conjure thee to enter into thy father's blessedness. Thou dost enter it when thou ownest the outcast for thy brother, when thou makest merry and art glad because he was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found." So pleaded the Eternal Father by the mouth of Jesus with His Jewish people. So pleads He with us in this Passion Week. Do you want wages for your virtue, for your faith, for your superiority to the rest of mankind? You must ask the devil for those wages; for the service of pride he will give you strictly and punctually the wages of death. Do you desire the delight of the Father who so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son for it? Do you want the delight of the Son who poured out His blood for all men, who is the Saviour of all men? Do you want the delight of the Spirit, who is seeking to bring all to repentance and the knowledge of the truth? "Son, thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine." Thou mayest possess My own character. Thou mayest declare My purpose to those who have lost themselves. Thou mayest be My instrument in finding them. And if they never hear thy feeble voice, thou needest not doubt that they will hear the voice of the Son of Man; that by hunger and misery Ha

will remind them of their Father's house; that they will arise and go to Him; that He will meet them when they are a great way off; that He will embrace them and bring them to His banquet; that His Spirit will enable them to feed on the perfect Sacrifice, and to offer themselves acceptable sacrifices to Him. (*F. D. Maurice, M.A.*) *Self-importance*.—1. Observe how self-importance makes a man moody and unhappy. He who is always thinking of his own excellences, renders himself thereby unfit to enjoy the good of others, and is prone to imagine that every token of affection given to another is an insult offered to himself. Hence he is touchy, sensitive, irritable, and envious. There is no surer way to make ourselves miserable than to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. It isolates us from all about us. May God deliver us from this idolatry of self, on whose altar all true nobleness and real happiness are completely immolated! 2. Notice, again, how repulsive to others this self-important spirit is. You cannot take to this elder brother. Even in his wanderings and sins, the younger was more lovable than he, his industry and sobriety notwithstanding. So it is ever with the selfish one. He is a non-conductor in society. The electricity of love never passes through him; and in the end, all loving hearts are driven from him. Thus he is not only the most unhappy, but also the most useless of men. He has no magnetism about him. He can gain no entrance into the hearts of others. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *The elder son's disposition*.—When a Christian of long standing and irreproachable character, who has known some degree of happiness in Christ, but has not had anything approaching to ecstasy, is inclined to be suspicious of the genuineness of the transport of him who has just been converted from a life of grossest sin, and is disposed, in envy, to ask, "Why should such experiences be granted to him, while I, who have been seeking to follow Jesus all my days, know nothing of them?" we have the working of the same disposition as that which the elder brother here displayed. When a minister of age and excellence, who is mourning over the apparent fruitlessness of his labours, is tempted to ask how it comes that a young brother, in the very outset of his career, is made instrumental in bringing multitudes to Christ, and permits himself to think, if not to say, that it is "mean" in God to pass by an old and faithful servant such as he has been, and to use and bless an inexperienced lad; or when a stickler for order and decorum murmurs that the Lord should honour with success the irregularities of a revival meeting, and the labours of some "converted burglar," in larger measure than he seems to bless the stated workings of the authorized ministry in the ordinary exercises of the sanctuary; or when some father, prominent in the Church for piety and usefulness, is led, in his haste and in his self-importance, to ask, "How comes it that the children of thison and that one—of little name among the brethren, and hardly known for their zeal and devotedness—are all converted, while my son is permitted to grow up in sin, and to become to me a source of constant anxiety?"—in each and all of these we have a phasis of that unlovely disposition which, in the elder brother, is here condemned. The Sabbath-school teacher who throws up the work because another seems more successful in it than himself; the labourer in any department of benevolent activity, who, because he thinks that more is made of some one else than of himself, gives way to personal pique, and will have no more to do with the concern; the over-sensitive, irritable, petted man, who is for ever taking offence, and manages somehow to exclude himself from every society with which he has been connected, and to estrange himself from the sympathy and co-operation of all with whom he has come into contact; may all look here, and in the elder brother of this parable they will behold themselves. (*Ibid.*) *Elder brotherliness*.—Some years ago I preached to my congregation in Liverpool, one Lord's Day morning, from this episode in the parable of the Prodigal Son. As I was leaving the church for my home, I was requested to visit a dying man whom I had seen frequently before, but who was just then, apparently, about to pass within the veil. He had been for many years a careless and irreligious man; but as I spoke with him from time to time, I marked that a great change had come over him. I had conversed faithfully and earnestly with him, of Jesus and His salvation; and he had turned in sincere penitence to his Father, and was, as I sincerely believe, accepted with Him. When I entered his room that morning, I found him in great happiness, rejoicing in the near prospect of being with his Lord, and apparently perfectly happy. I talked with him a little on the things of the kingdom, and after prayer I took my leave. His brother-in-law followed me downstairs, and said, "I cannot understand this at all. Here have I been serving Christ for these twenty years, and I have never experienced such joy as he expresses; and yet he has not been a Christian, if he be really one, for more

than a few weeks." Immediately I recognized the elder brother, and I stayed long enough to show him just how he looked in the light of this parable. I told him that I had been preaching about him that very morning. "About me?" he said. "Yes, about you"; and I then went on to explain to him the meaning of this episode, while I warned him of the danger of being angry, and refusing to go into the Father's house to share the joy over the returning prodigal. The result was that he saw his error, and was delivered from his envy. Now, that incident, occurring just at that precise time, has given a new point to the parable in my view ever since, and makes me far more anxious to get the elder-brotherliness out of my own heart than to identify the elder brother with any particular class. (*Ibid.*)

Pharisaism in ourselves:—There is sufficient Pharisaism in each of us to justify the application of this to ourselves. They who have long served God with care and diligence, and yet find their life a hard struggle, with few bright passages, many disappointments, and never joy such as the penitent at once enters into, naturally feel some soreness that one step should bring a lifelong sinner abreast of them. You may have been striving all your days to be useful, and making great sacrifices to further what you believe to be the cause of God, and yet you cannot point to any success; but suddenly a man converted yesterday takes your place, and all things seem to shape themselves to his hand, and the field that was a heart-break to you is fertile to him. You have denied yourself every pleasure that you might know the happiness of communion with God, and you have not known it, but you see a banquet spread in God's presence for him who has till this hour been delighting in sin. You have had neither the riotous living nor the fatted calf. You have gone among the abandoned and neglected, and striven to enlighten and lift them; you have done violence to your own feelings that you might be helpful to others; and, so far as you can see, nothing has come of it. But another man who has lived irregularly, who has not prepared himself for the work, who is untaught, imprudent, unsatisfactory, has the immediate joy of winning souls to God. Have you not been tempted to say, "Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency"? All this may be needful to convince you that it is not service that wins God's love; that His love is with you now, and that your acceptance of it will make all that has seemed to you grievous to be light and happy. Take refuge from all failure and disappointment in the words, "Son, I am ever with thee, and all that I have is thine." Learn to find your joy in Him, and you will be unable to think of any reward. (*Marcus Dods, D.D.*)

Contracted views in religion:—In the conduct of the father, there seemed, at first sight, an evident departure from the rules of fairness and justice. Here was a reprobate son received into his favour on the first stirrings of repentance. What was the use of serving him dutifully, if there were no difference in the end between the righteous and the wicked? This is what we feel and act upon in life constantly. In doing good to the poor, for instance, a chief object is to encourage industrious and provident habits; and it is evident we should hurt and disappoint the better sort, and defeat our object, if, after all, we did not take into account the difference of their conduct, though we promised to do so, but gave those who did not work nor save all the benefits granted to those who did. The elder brother's case, then, seemed a hard one; and that, even without supposing him to feel jealous, or to have unsuitable notions of his own importance and usefulness. Apply this to the case of religion, and it still holds good. At first sight, the reception of the penitent sinner seems to interfere with the reward of the faithful servant of God. Just as the promise of pardon is abused by bad men to encourage themselves in sinning on, that grace may abound; so, on the other hand, it is misapprehended by the good, so as to dispirit them. For what is our great stay and consolation amid the perturbations of this world? The truth and justice of God. This is our one light in the midst of darkness. "He loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity;" "just and right is He." Where else should we find rest for our foot all over the world? The condescending answer of the father in the parable is most instructive. It sanctions the great truth which seemed in jeopardy, that it is *not* the same thing in the end to obey or disobey, expressly telling us that the Christian penitent is not placed on a footing with those who have consistently served God from the first. "Son, thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine": that is, why this sudden fear and distrust? can there be any misconception on thy part because I welcome thy brother? dost thou not yet understand Me? Surely thou hast known Me too long to suppose that thou canst lose by his gain. Thou art in My confidence. I do not make any outward display of kindness towards thee, for it is a thing to be taken for granted. We give

praise and make professions to strangers, not to friends. Thou art My heir, all that I have is thine. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Who could have thought that it were needful to tell to thee truths which thou hast heard all thy life long? Thou art *ever* with Me; and canst thou really grudge that I should by one mere *act* of rejoicing, show My satisfaction at the sinner's recovery, and should console him with a promise of mercy, who, before he heard of it, was sinking down under the dread of deserved punishment? "It was *meet* that we should, make merry and be glad," thou as well as thy Father. Such is our merciful God's answer to His suspicious servants, who think He cannot pardon the sinner without withdrawing His favour from them; and it contains in it both a consolation for the perplexed believer not to distrust Him; and again, a warning to the disobedient, not to suppose that repentance makes all straight and even, and puts a man in the same place as if he had never departed from grace given. But let us now notice the unworthy feeling which appears in the conduct of the elder brother. "He was angry, and would not go" into the house. How may this be fulfilled in our own case? There exists a great deal of infirmity and foolishness even in the better sort of men. This is not to be wondered at, considering the original corrupt state of their nature, however it is to be deplored, repented of, and corrected. Good men are, like Elijah, "jealous for the Lord God of hosts," and rightly solicitous to see His tokens around them, the pledges of His unchangeable just government; but then they mix with such good feelings undue notions of self-importance, of which they are not aware. This seemingly was the state of mind which dictated the complaint of the elder brother. This will especially happen in the case of those who are in the most favoured situations in the Church. All places possess their peculiar temptation. Quietness and peace, those greatest of blessings, constitute the trial of the Christians who enjoy them. They become not only over-confident of their knowledge of God's ways, but positive in their over-confidence. They are apt to presume, and so to become irreverent. Give them much, they soon forget it is much; and when they find it is not all, and that for other men, too, even for penitents, God has some good in store, straightway they are offended. Without denying in words their own natural unworthiness, and still having real convictions of it to a certain point, nevertheless, somehow, they have a certain secret over-regard for themselves; at least they *act* as if they thought that the Christian privileges belonged to them over others, by a sort of fitness. And they like respect to be shown them by the world, and are jealous of anything which is likely to interfere with the continuance of their credit and authority. Perhaps, too, they have pledged themselves to certain received opinions, and this is an additional reason for their being suspicious of what to them is a novelty. Hence such persons are least fitted to deal with difficult times. God works wondrously in the world; and at certain eras His providence puts on a new aspect. Religion seems to be failing, when it is merely changing its form. God seems for an instant to desert His own appointed instruments, and to be putting honour upon such as have been framed in express disobedience to His commands. For instance, sometimes He brings about good by means of wicked men, or seems to bless the efforts of those who have separated from His Holy Church more than those of His true labourers. Here is the trial of the Christian faith, who, if the fact is so, must not resist it, lest haply he be found fighting against God, nor must he quarrel with it after the manner of the elder brother. But he must take everything as God's gift, hold fast his *principles*, not give *them* up because appearances are for the moment against them, but believe all things will come round at length. On the other hand, he must not cease to beg of God, and try to gain, the spirit of a sound mind, the power to separate truth from falsehood, and to try the spirits, the disposition to submit to God's teaching, and the wisdom to act as the varied course of affairs requires. (J. H. Newman, D.D.)

Son, thou art ever with me.—*Constant obedience better than repentance*.—Here the father, who at first rejoiced so greatly at the return of the prodigal, yet in his sedate judgment makes a wide difference between the penitent son and the innocent son. Let us, then, make out this point. 1. It is in itself a singular advantage to have set out well betimes, and to have kept the right way, like the elder son in the parable, who always adhered to his father. There is a sort of proverb which says that a young saint makes an old sinner; a young angel makes an old devil. But this proverb seems to have been made by the devil, or by one of his agents, on purpose to ridicule and discourage an early piety, which of all acquisitions is the most valuable. 2. They have likewise this advantage, that the difficulties, struggles, and dangers, which they have to encounter, are not so formidable as those to which

sinners remain exposed, even after their repentance and their good resolutions. Nothing is so hard as to overcome old vices, and to root up evil habits; for by custom they have taken firm hold, just like chronic diseases, which are seldom cured. From such grievous inconveniences he is freed who hath been accustomed to regular obedience. 3. There cannot be that settled content and security in the return and repentance of a sinner, as there is in an uniform and unbroken compliance with the laws of God. His hope will not be without a mixture of fear, as his fear is not without a mixture of hope. 4. Neither can such a penitent be so much in the favour of God, and so highly rewarded by Him, as one of more constant and regular virtues. This is a plain rule of eternal justice; it follows from the declarations that God will render to every one according to his works. 5. A regular obedience makes us more truly and properly the children of God. Let us now review a little the nature of the foregoing doctrine. 1. This doctrine allows whatsoever is due to repentance, and excludes none of the encouragements to it. Repentance is the sovereign cure for the worst diseases of the soul; but it must be applied in due time. Yet still it is better to be always well, than too often to stand in need of this medicine. 2. Be it observed that we are speaking all this while of repentance for evil habits, and for great and wilful offences; and as to this repentance, it is to be hoped that many Christians stand not in need of it. 3. This shows the advantage of early habits of goodness. Nothing makes religion sit so well upon us, as when it hath taken the first possession of the mind. 4. This doctrine prevents a common and pernicious mistake about repentance; and that is, to delay it, and to trust that a late sorrow and remorse shall reinstate an offender in the favour of God. 5. This doctrine stands upon such plain and solid principles, that no interpretation of any passages of Scripture contrary to it can possibly be true. (*J. Jortin, D.D.*)

Ever with God.—All will admit that the angels in light have ever been, and ever are, with God; but the question has sometimes been keenly discussed among critics and theologians, "May it be said that, during this dispensation of the Holy Spirit, some children have been so admirably trained, that they have never wholly left their Heavenly Father, but have been 'ever with Him'?" A sermon was once preached on this parable, by an earnest minister of the gospel, during a series of revival meetings, in which he went the length of saying that "it might be maintained concerning those who 'could not recollect a time when they did not love Christ,' that, like the elder son, they had never left their Father. They might be imperfect like him, and need forgiveness, as he evidently needed it—still they had never wholly left their Father." In supporting this position, the preacher could not see that he was doing any disrespect to the grace of God. Indeed, he was rather magnifying it, since God had promised to be the God of His people's seed, as well as their own God. When I was asked my opinion concerning this representation, I replied that I was inclined to go that length myself. There seems still to be such a thing as being "called from the womb." Observe, this tenet does not involve a denial of human depravity. It does not amount to the assertion that any responsible human being has lived an absolutely perfect life, being literally free from sin, except the Lord Jesus Christ. It only ventures humbly to express the hope, to the praise of the glory of God's grace, that where there has been much parental prayer and exemplary religious education, "the first springs of thought and will" may have been so early gained for the Redeemer, that the soul, although conscious of waywardness and sin, and therefore needing atoning blood, has never been wholly withdrawn from God's fold, so that He could say to such a follower near the end of his course, "Son, thou hast ever been and ever art near Me." (*F. Ferguson, D.D.*)

Love for all.—There is room for all. Sometimes, when a little babe has been born in a house, the elder child is jealous. The two-year-old envier has been seen using its, happily not very forcible, fists against the tiny occupant of the cradle, because its arrival had deprived him of customary attention, and of that monopoly of love which he had enjoyed before. Then the concerned parent has taken the sulking pugilist on her knee and, with a tear in her eye, has said, "You are mother's pet still. She has room in her heart for you and your baby brother too. You will always be mother's child, although baby has come home—only you have been here many days, but he is only newly arrived. Therefore, wonder not at our joy, and grieve not, if for a time, you seem to be overlooked." This is exactly the argument of the text, with the element of prodigality left out. (*Ibid.*)

It was meet that we should make merry.—*Good reasons for joy*.—1. It is meet that we should rejoice, because when a sinner is brought to repentance, the kingdom of Christ is

thereby promoted. He is all in all. Everything turns upon your receiving Him. Life and death, heaven or hell, felicity or ruin, here and hereafter, all rest with Him.

2. It is meet that we should rejoice, because, then, an immortal creature is rescued from misery, and another traveller is on the road to heaven. 3. It is meet that we should rejoice, because a sinner brought to repentance will injure others no more. When a sinner is converted, another agent of destruction is removed. Another gun on the enemy's ramparts is spiked. Another soldier in Satan's army is struck down. Another poison-chalice is dashed from the devil's hand. Another upas tree is uprooted. Another electric cloud is dispersed, to send down thunder and death no more. Another vessel of honour is placed in the Master's house, prepared for His use, to be employed hereafter in His blessed and holy service. (*W. B. Mackenzie, M.A.*)

God's joy at the sinner's return:—I saw in Amsterdam the diamond cutting, and I noticed great wheels, a large factory and powerful engines, and all the power was made to bear upon a small stone no larger than the nail of my little finger. All that huge machinery for that little stone, because it was so precious! Methinks I see you poor insignificant sinners, who have rebelled against your God, brought back to your Father's house, and now the whole universe is full of wheels, and all those wheels are working together for your good, to make out of you a jewel fit to glisten in the Redeemer's crown. God is not represented as saying more of creation than that "it was very good," but in the work of grace He is described as singing for joy. He breaks the eternal silence, and cries, "My son is found." As the philosopher, when he had compelled nature to yield her secret, ran through the street, crying, "Eureka! Eureka! I have found it! I have found it!" so does the Father dwell on the word, "My son that was dead, is alive again, he that was lost is found." (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Was dead, and is alive again.—*Life after death*:—Startling tales are sometimes related around the fire, on a winter's night, of the dead who have come to life again. I remember being told in my youth that the mother of two eminent ministers had been buried in a swoon before her twin sons were born. The covetous sexton, having opened her grave, was cutting off her finger to get her gold marriage ring, when she awoke and spoke. Who could envy such an one a joyous jubilation on her return to life? And who should envy the quickened sinner the honour that is paid him by God and man? For he is often brought to spiritual life when the Lord, by His faithful knife of chastisement, cuts some prized and precious treasure away. Some time ago the great Dr. Livingstone was thought to be dead—wholly lost in the African wilds. I so thoroughly believed the report which his lying companions circulated, that I preached a discourse which was designed to do him honour, and especially the God he had served. I take great pleasure in here acknowledging that my discourse was premature, and in expressing my delight at the news of the Doctor's safety which has since reached our shores, as well as my hope that he may soon be welcomed home by his friends "safe and sound." And what friend or fellow-townsmen could grudge him a very special and remarkable reception—because "he was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found"? This is the very "expostulation" by means of which the Saviour in this parable seeks to still the murmurs of the Pharisees, and which at every time of revival earnestness and revival success is specially appropriate. A young woman mentioned to me one day that her brother, an engineer in a steamer between Bombay and the Red Sea, had informed her in a recent letter that he saw the Abyssinian prisoners land at Suez. They looked pale and exhausted. They had the appearance of people who had suffered much by anxiety and confinement. But, as they stepped ashore, all the Europeans crowded around and gave them three hearty cheers, which they acknowledged with smiles of gratitude and satisfaction. I wish that I had seen them land. I would have cheered too with all my might. For Britain had done a grand thing in sending out that expedition—enough to stamp her as in reality *Great Britain* in the eyes of the nations. Nor can we find a better illustration of the gospel. It was meet that the sympathizing spectators at Suez should make the welkin ring with their shouts of joy; for the captives of Theodore, like the captives of sin and Satan, "had been dead, and were alive again; and had been lost, and were found." And who could grudge them such a welcome to life and liberty again? (*F. Ferguson, D.D.*)

Concluding reflection on this parable:—If John iii. 16, and 1 Tim. i. 15, have been the most useful of Scripture texts, the parable of the prodigal son has been one of the most useful of Scripture paragraphs. If Rom. iii. 19-31 has ever been esteemed by scholars the *locus classicus* for the display of the righteousness of God, Luke xv. 11-32, has ever been regarded by evangelists as the

locus sanctus et fertilis for the display of the love of God. I would also observe that it suits rich and poor alike. I was paying a pastoral visit one day to one of the officials of a great poor-house in the neighbourhood of the city in which my lot has been cast. The chaplain asked me to conduct evening prayers. I found myself placed in unwonted circumstances. I stood in a spacious hall, capable of containing fifteen hundred individuals, and seated like a church. About twelve hundred paupers joined in the evening devotions. Three times a day they were wont to assemble there to receive the plain supplies of the bread that perisheth, which charity had provided; and, twice a day, to worship God. My heart filled as they sang with me the beautiful paraphrase, beginning "O God of Bethel, by whose hand," and especially when they came to the couplet—

"O spread Thy covering wings around
Till all our wanderings cease";

for the great building in which they sang in rough, unpolished strains, since it had been reared by Christ-inspired benevolence, looked like the covering wings of the Almighty, which had been spread around them. In the course of conversation, at the close of the service, the chaplain informed me that several of the ministers of the city had preached on the Sabbath evenings of the preceding summer, and that the poor people had been greatly delighted with their discourses. But what had pleased them most of all had been a sermon by the late Doctor Norman Macleod on the Parable of the Prodigal Son. I had noticed in the newspapers that he had delivered the same sermon, a few weeks before, to a fashionable audience, when many carriages were standing at the door. It delighted me that he had dispensed that identical supply of the bread of life to the inmates of the poor-house; for, in truth, we are all on a level. We are all God's offspring, and are all pensioners on His bounty. The poor people had enjoyed greatly the rich representation of the love of God which the parable contains. Many of them had been bathed in tears. For the career of the prodigal had been their career. They would not have been glad of the poor-house, if they had not "wasted their substance with riotous living." And not only had the arms of the world's charity been opened to receive them, but, warmer and kindlier far, the arms of the Divine good-will were ready to clasp them round. Yes, the parable to which I am bidding farewell for the present suits the high and low, the rich and poor, the West End and the East End alike. Lastly, it is capable of edifying application to the hour of death. Here we are all "in a far country." "At home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." We often feel that our engagements and pursuits are, like the prodigal's occupation, beneath the dignity of our immortal spirits. Amid degraded men we sigh for the purity and royalty of our Father's house on high. At length a gentle summons comes in friendly disease; and the dying Christian, responding to the call, says, "I will arise and go to my Father." As he lies upon his bed of pain, in crowded city or rural hamlet, "his Father sees him afar off and has compassion on him." By the kind ministrations of His grace, "He makes all his bed in his sickness." At length, when his disembodied spirit approaches the heavenly house, a father's kiss and a father's welcome are received. Then the robe of glory, the ring of full redemption, and spiritual shoes, are given to the weary traveller. Oh, what rejoicing takes place over his safe arrival, at the heavenly feast, amid whose transports he completely forgets the sorrows of the far country! No sullen celestials seem jealous of his cordial reception—

"The wondering angels round Him throng
And swell the chorus of His praise,"

(Ibid.)

CHAPTER XVI.

VERB. 1-8. There was a certain rich man, which had a steward.—*Christ's servants are stewards*.—1. SHOW WHAT THINGS THEY ARE ENTRUSTED WITH, THAT ARE NOT THEIR OWN. 1. All earthly good things, as riches, health, time, opportunities. 2. Also spiritual goods, viz., the gospel and its ministration, spiritual knowledge, gifts,

grace, the worship of God, and His ordinances, promises, providences, and care of His holy temple or vineyard. II. SHOW WHY WE MUST CAREFULLY IMPROVE ALL THINGS THAT ARE IN OUR HANDS. 1. Earthly things. (1) Because, whatsoever we have put into our hands is to advance the honour of our great Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, and to refresh, comfort, and support the whole household where we are placed. (2) Because we have nothing that is our own; it is our Lord's goods. (3) Because if we are not faithful in the least, it may stop the hand of Christ from giving the greater things to us. (4) It will be otherwise a wrong and great injustice to the poor, or to such for the sake of whom they that are rich are entrusted with earthly wealth, in withholding that which is theirs by Christ's appointment from them; and so a clear demonstration of unfaithfulness both to God and man; and it may provoke God to take away from them what they have. (5) Because we must in a short time be called to give an account of our stewardship; we must expect to hear Christ say, "What have you done with My gold and silver, My corn, My wool, and My flax? How is it that My poor have wanted bread and clothes, and My ministers have been neglected and forced to run into debt to buy necessities to support their families?" (6) Because if these good things be not rightly and faithfully improved as Christ commands, His poor and His ministers may be exposed to great temptations, and their souls borne down and sorely discouraged; and Satan may get advantages against them, for many snares and dangers attend outward want; moreover the name of God and religion may also thereby be exposed to the contempt of the world. Who can believe we are the people of God, when they cannot see that love to one another among them which is the character of true Christians? Or how should they think that we believe the way we are in is the true way and worship of God? 2. Spiritual things. (1) The gospel and its ministration, because it is given to the end that we may profit thereby. It is Christ's chief treasure, and that which He intrusts very few with. If not improved, He may take it away from us, as He has already from others. When that goes, God, Christ, and all good goes, and all evil will come in. (2) Spiritual gifts, knowledge, &c., because given for the use and profit of the Church; and they that have them are but stewards of them, which they are commanded to improve (1 Pet. iv. 10). Use: Get your accounts ready; you know not but this night Christ may say, "Give an account," &c. (B. Keach.) *All men are stewards of God*:—A friend stepping into the office of a Christian business man one day, noticed that he was standing at his desk with his hands full of banknotes, which he was carefully counting, as he laid them down one by one. After a brief silence the friend said: "Mr. H—, just count out ten pounds from that pile of notes and make yourself or some other person a life member of the Christian Giving Society!" He finished his count, and quickly replied, "I'm handling trust funds now!" His answer instantly flashed a light on the entire work and life of a Christian, and the friend replied to his statement with the question, "Do you ever handle anything but trust funds?" If Christians would only realize that all that God gives us is "in trust," what a change would come over our use of money! "I'm handling trust funds now." Let the merchant write the motto over his desk; the farmer over the income of his farm; the labourer over his wages; the professional man over his salary; the banker over his income; the housekeeper over her house expense purse; the boy and girl over "pocket money"—and what a change would be made in our life. A business man who had made a donation of one thousand pounds to a Christian enterprise, once said in the hearing of the writer—"I hold that a man is accountable for every sixpence he gets." There is the gospel idea of "trust funds." Let parents instruct and train their children to "handle trust funds" as the stewards of God's bounty, and there will be a new generation of Christians. *The proper improvement of temporal possessions*:—I. That the common maxims of human wisdom in the conduct of worldly affairs, and even those of carnal and unjust policy, may be usefully applied for our direction in the concerns of religion, and they reproach the folly and slothfulness of Christians in working out their salvation; "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." II. The second observation is, that riches and other gifts of providence are but little in comparison with the greater and more substantial blessings which God is ready to bestow on His sincere and faithful servants; that these inferior things are committed to Christians as to stewards for the trial of their fidelity, and they who improve them carefully to the proper ends for which they were given, are entitled to the greater benefits which others forfeit, and render themselves unworthy of, by negligence and unfaithfulness. This is the meaning of the 10th

and 11th verses—"He who is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much; if, therefore, you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" We may further observe upon this head, that God hath wisely ordered the circumstances of this life in subordination to another. The enjoyments of our present state are the means of trying our virtue, and the occasions of exercising it, that so by a due improvement of them to that purpose, we may be prepared for the perfection of virtue, and complete happiness hereafter. This might be illustrated in a variety of particular instances—indeed, in the whole compass of our worldly affairs, which, according as they are conducted, either minister to virtue or vice. By the various uncertain events of life, as some are tempted to different distracting passions, to eager, anxious desire, to fear and sorrow, so there is to better disposed minds an opportunity of growing in self-dominion, in an equal and uniform temper, and a more earnest prevalent desire of true goodness, which is immutable in all external changes; in afflictions there is a trial and an increase of patience, which is of so much moment as to be represented in Scripture as the height of religious perfection. Knowledge, likewise, is capable of being greatly improved for the service of mankind; and all our talents of this sort, which are distributed promiscuously to men, though little in themselves, and with respect to the main ends of our being, yet to the diligent and faithful servant, who useth them well and wisely for the cause of virtue, and under the direction of its principles, they bring great returns of real and solid benefit, which shall abide with him for ever. Thus it appeareth that Divine Providence hath wisely ordered the circumstances of our condition in this world, in our infancy of being, so that by the proper exercise of our own faculties, and the industrious improvement of the opportunities which are afforded us, we may be prepared for a better and happier state hereafter. But if, on the contrary, we are unjust to our great Master, and to ourselves, that is, to our highest interest, in the little, which is now committed to us, we thereby forfeit the greatest good we are capable of, and deprive ourselves of the true riches. If in the first trial which God taketh of us, as moral agents during our immature state, our state of childhood, we do not act a proper part, but are given up to indolence and sloth, and to a prodigal waste of our talents, the consequences of this folly and wickedness will naturally, and by the just judgment of God, cleave to us in every stage of our existence; of which there is a familiar instance every day before us in those unhappy persons who having from early youth obstinately resisted the best instructions, for the most part continue unreclaimed through their whole lives, and bring themselves to a miserable end. Let us, therefore, always consider ourselves as now under probation and discipline, and that eternal consequences of the greatest moment depend upon our present conduct. III. The third observation is, THAT THE THINGS OF THIS WORLD COMMITTED TO OUR TRUST ARE NOT OUR OWN, BUT THE PROPERTY OF ANOTHER; BUT THE GIFTS OF GOD, GRANTED AS THEREAFTER OF OUR IMPROVING THEM FAITHFULLY, HAVE A NEARER AND MORE IMMEDIATE RELATION TO OURSELVES, AND A STRICT INSEPARABLE CONNECTION WITH OUR HAPPINESS. "And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?" (ver. 12.) The things which are said to be another's, are, the unrighteous mammon, and others like it; God is the sovereign proprietor of them; they are foreign to the constitution of the human nature, and their usefulness to it is only accidental and temporary. But the other goods, virtuous integrity and the favour of God, enter deeper into the soul, and by its essential frame are a never-failing spring of joy and consolation to it in every state of existence. It is very surprising that a man, who so much loveth and is devoted to himself, being naturally and necessarily so determined, should be so ignorant, as many are, what that self really is, and thereby be misled to place his affections on something else instead of it. By the least attention every man will see that what is meant by himself is the same person or intelligent agent, the thinking, conscious "I," which remaineth unaltered in all changes of condition, from the remembrance of his earliest thoughts and actions to the present moment. How remote from this are riches, power, honour, health, strength, the matter ingredient in the composition of the body, and even its limbs, which may be all lost, and self still the same? These things, therefore, are "not our own," meaning by that, what most properly and unalienably belongeth to ourselves; we hold them by an uncertain, precarious tenure, they come and go, while the same conscious, thinking being, which is strictly the man himself, continueth unchanged, in honour and dishonour, in riches and poverty, in sickness and health, and all the other differences of our outward state. But, on the contrary, a

state of religious virtue, which it is the intention of Christianity to bring us to, and which is the immediate effect of improving our talents diligently and faithfully, that "kingdom of God which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost"; this is of a quite different kind, it entereth into our very selves, and closely adhereth to us; it improveth our nature, refineth and enlargeth its noblest powers; it is so much "our own," as to become our very temper, and the ruling bent of our minds; there is nothing we are more directly conscious of in ourselves than good dispositions and good actions proceeding from them, and the consciousness is always accompanied with delight. The good man is therefore "satisfied from himself," because his satisfaction ariseth from a review of his goodness which is intimately his own. (*J. Abernethy, M.A.*)

Stewardship:—I. THE OFFICE OF STEWARD. 1. A steward is a man who administers a property which is not his own. His relation to property is distinguished on the one hand from that of those who have nothing to do with the property, because the steward has everything to do with it that he can do for its advantage; and, on the other hand, from that of the owner of the property, because the steward is no sense the owner of it, but only the administrator. His duty towards it is dependent on the will of another, and it may terminate at any moment. 2. The office of a steward is before all things a trust. It represents in human affairs a venture which the owner of a property makes, upon the strength of his estimate of the character of the man to whom he delegates the care of the property. 3. An account must at some time be rendered to some one. (1) We are accountable to public opinion. (2) To our own conscience. (3) To God. If man has no account to give, no wrong that he does has the least consequence. If man has no account to give, no wrong that is done to him, and that is unpunished by human law, will ever be punished. If man has no account to give, life is a hideous chaos; it is a game of chance in which the horrible and the grotesque alternately bury out of sight the very last vestiges of a moral order. If man has no account to give, the old Epicurean rule in all its profound degradation may have much to say for itself (1 Cor. xv. 32).

II. HUMAN LIFE IS A STEWARDSHIP. We are stewards, whether as men or as Christians; not less in the order of nature than in the order of grace. 1. Every owner of property is in God's sight a steward of that property, and, sooner or later, He will demand an account. Has it, however little, been spent conscientiously; or merely as the passion or freak of the moment might suggest? 2. Or, the estate of which we are stewards is a more interesting and precious one than this. It is situated in the world of the mind, in the region where none but knowledge and speculation and imagination and taste have their place and sway. Yet all this is not ours, but God's. He is the Author of the gifts which have laid out the world of taste and thought and knowledge; and each contributor to that world, and each student, or even each loiterer in it, is only the steward, the trustee, of endowments, of faculties which, however intimately his own when we distinguish him from other men, are not his own when we look higher and place them in the light of the rights of God. "Give an account of thy stewardship." The real Author and Owner of the gifts of mind sometimes utters this summons to His stewards before the time of death. He withdraws the mental life of man, and leaves him still with the animal life intact and vigorous. Go to a lunatic asylum, that most pitiable assortment of all the possibilities of human degradation, and mark there, at least among some of the sufferers, those who abuse the stewardship of intelligence. 3. Or, the estate of which we are stewards is something higher still. It is the creed which we believe, the hopes which we cherish, the religion in which we find our happiness and peace as Christians. With this treasure, which He has withheld from others, God has entrusted us Christians, in whatever measure, for our own good, and also for the good of our fellow-men. Religion, too, is a loan, a trust; it is not an inalienable property. 4. And then, growing out of those three estates, is the estate of influence—that subtle, inevitable effect for good or for ill which man exerts upon the lives of those around him. The question is, what use are we making of it; how is it telling upon friends, acquaintances, servants, correspondents, those who know us only from a distance—are we helping them upwards or downwards, to heaven or to hell? Surely a momentous question for all of us, since of this stewardship events may summon us before the end comes to give account. 5. And a last estate of which we are but stewards, is health and life. This bodily frame, so fearfully and wonderfully made, of such subtle and delicate texture that the wonder is that it should bear the wear and tear of time, and last as long as for many of us it does—of this we are not owners, we are only stewards. It is most assuredly no

creation of our own, this body; and He who gave it us will in any case one day withdraw His gift. And yet how many a man thinks in his secret heart that if he owns nothing else, he does at least own, as its absolute master might own, the fabric of flesh and bones, nerves and veins, in which his animal life resides: that with this, at least, he may rightfully do what he will, even abuse and ruin and irretrievably degrade, and even kill; that here no question of another's right can possibly occur; that here he is master on his own ground, and not a steward. Oh, piteous forgetfulness in a man who believes that he has a Creator, and that that Creator has His rights! Oh, piteous ingratitude in a Christian, who should remember that he is not his own, but is bought with a price, and that therefore he should glorify God in his body no less than in his spirit, since both are God's! Oh, piteous illusion, the solemn moment for dissipating which is ever hurrying on apace! The Author of health and life has His own time for bidding us give an account of this solemn stewardship—often, too, when it is least expected. (*Canon Liddon*).

Moral stewardship:—I. MEN ARE STEWARDS. 1. In regard to their talents. (1) Time. (2) Money. (3) Physical, mental, and moral abilities. 2. In regard to their privileges. Each privilege is a sacred talent, to be utilized for personal, spiritual end. Golden in character. Uncertain in continuance. 3. In regard to their opportunities. Men are responsible not only for what they do, but also for what they are capable of doing. II. MEN ARE STEWARDS ONLY. Whatever we have, we have received, hold in trust, and must account for to God. III. THE RECKONING DAY IS COMING. 1. The day of reckoning is certain. 2. Uncertain as to the time. 3. Divine in its procedure. God Himself will make the final award. 4. Solemn in its character. 5. Eternal in its issues. Learn—1. That moral responsibility is a solemn thing. 2. It is imposed upon us without our own consent. 3. That we cannot avert the day of reckoning. 4. That upon the proper use of our talents shall we reap the reward of life and blessedness. 5. That unfaithfulness to our solemn responsibilities will entail eternal disgrace and everlasting reprobation. (*J. Tesseymann*).

The stewardship of life:—I. THE TRUST REPOSED IN US—"Thy stewardship." Stewardship is based upon the idea of another's proprietorship. 1. Of the Divine Proprietorship. 2. Stewardship implies interests entrusted to human keeping and administration. 3. Stewardship implies human capability. Faithfulness cannot be compelled by an omnipotent Ruler. It is a subject of moral choice. II. THE END OF OUR STEWARDSHIP AS HERE SUGGESTED—"Give an account. Thou mayest be no longer steward." Moral responsibility is the solemn heritage of all rational intelligences. 1. The stewardship may be held to be determinable at death. Moral power continues, and moral obligations and duties rest on the spirit. So, there will be stewardship in eternity. But here the concern is with "the deeds done in the body." 2. Stewardship may practically be determined before the last hour of mortal history. (*The Preacher's Monthly*).

The unjust steward:—1. We are stewards, not proprietors. 2. Let me urge upon you to be faithful in whatsoever position in life you may be. 3. It is only as you are in Christ, and Christ in you, that you will be able to realize your true position, and act with true faithfulness. (*A. F. Barfield*).

Christian prudence:—I. THE OBLIGATION TO THIS. 1. Because we are dependent on God. 2. Because we are accountable to Him. II. ITS PROPER NATURE. 1. In general. (1) It is provident of the future. (2) It conceals not from itself the true state of matters. (3) It is inventive of means for its well-being. (4) It forms its purpose with greatest determination. (5) It discloses clearly who or what can be of service to it for the accomplishment of its purpose. (6) It does not content itself with purposes, but goes immediately to action. (7) It employs the time without delay. (8) It transacts everything with careful consideration. 2. In particular. (1) It employs temporal goods in well-doing. (2) It is mindful of death and the day of reckoning. (3) It has an eye to eternal bliss. III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF IT. 1. It obtains the approval of the Lord and Judge of all. 2. It renders us capable and worthy of receiving greater, truer, abiding goods. (*F. G. Lisco*). *Lessons*:—1. A regard to our own interest is a commendable principle. The great fault which men commit is, that they mistake the nature as well as the means of happiness. 2. There is another object which our Saviour has in view. It is to compare the sagacity and exertion which worldly men employ in order to attain their ends with the lukewarmness and negligence of the children of light. Do we not see with what ardour and perseverance those who place their happiness in wealth pursue their grand object? 3. We learn from this parable, and the observations of our Saviour which accompany it, the manner

in which riches may be applied for the advancement of happiness. 4. From this passage we may learn the benefit which good men may derive from observing the vices which prevail around them. This lesson our Saviour has taught us. By seeing vice, as it appears in the world, we may learn the nature and character, the effects and consequences of it. 5. But the principal object of this parable was evidently to teach us that the exercise of forethought is an important duty required of all Christians. Forethought, then, is necessary to reformation. It is not less necessary to improvement. For does not improvement presuppose that we seek or watch for opportunities of exercising our benevolent affections—of doing good and kind actions—and of supplying the importunate wants of the needy and the destitute? (*J. Thomson, D.D.*) *The unjust steward an example in one respect*:—If we were to wait for perfect men, men perfect in all parts and on all sides of their character, before admiring them or asking others to admire them, whom should we admire? what models or examples could we hold up before our children or our neighbours? Instead of turning so foolishly from the instruction human life offers us, we detach this quality or that from the character of men, and admire that, without for a moment meaning to set up all the man was or did as a complete model, an exact and full epitome of human excellence. We can call the attention of our children to the dexterity of a cricketer or a juggler without supposing, or being supposed, to make him the beau ideal of mental and moral character. We can admire Lord Bacon as one of “the greatest” and “wisest” of mankind, if we also admit him to have been one of “the meanest.” We can quote an eminent sceptic as a very model of patience and candour, yet deplore his scepticism. Both we and the Bible can detach noble qualities from the baser matter with which they are blended, and say, “Imitate these men in what was noble, pure, lovely,” without being supposed to add, “and imitate them also in what was mean, weak, immoral.” Why, then, should we deny our Lord the liberty we claim for ourselves? What should we expect of Him but the mode of teaching which pervades the Bible throughout? Above all, why should we suppose Him to approve what is evil in the men He puts before us, unless He expressly warns us against it, when we ourselves, and the inspired writers, seldom make any such provision against misconception? Read the parable honestly, and, according to all the analogies of human and inspired speech, you will expect to find some excellent quality in the steward which you will do well to imitate; but you will not for an instant suppose that it is his evil qualities which you are to approve. Do any ask, “What was this excellent quality?” Mark what it is, and what alone it is, that even his lord commends in the Unjust Steward. It is not his injustice, but his prudence. “His lord commended him because he had done wisely”—because on a critical occasion he had acted with a certain promptitude and sagacity, because he had seen his end clearly and gone straight at it. Did he not deserve the praise? (*S. Cox*). *Our stewardship*:—I. IN THE PRESENT LIFE EVERY ONE OF US HAS THE CHARACTER AND PLACE OF A STEWARD. II. THE TIME OF OUR STEWARDSHIP WILL HAVE AN END. 1. It will end certainly at death. 2. It may end suddenly. 3. Our stewardship, once ended, shall be renewed no more. When death comes, our negligences and mismanagement are fatal. III. ON OUR CEASING TO BE STEWARDS, AN ACCOUNT OF OUR STEWARDSHIP WILL BE REQUIRED. 1. Who must give an account? I answer, every one that lives and is here a steward. 2. To whom? And this is to God; to God by Christ, to whom all judgment is committed. 3. Of what will an account be demanded? The text says, of our stewardship, *i.e.*, how we have acted in it while it lasted. 4. When will such an account be demanded? The Scripture tells us—(1) Immediately upon every one's going out of his stewardship. (2) Most solemnly at the last day. 5. What is conveyed in the expression, “Give an account of thy stewardship”? (1) That God will deal with every one in particular. (2) That notice is taken, and records kept of what every one now does, and this in order to a future judgment, when all is to be produced, and sentence publicly passed. (3) Every one's account called for to be given, shall be according to the talents wherewith he was entrusted. Application: 1. Is every one in the present life to be considered as a steward of all that he enjoys? How unreasonable is pride in those who have the largest share of their Lord's goods; as they have nothing but what they have received, and the more their talents, the greater the trust. 2. What cause of serious concern have all that live under the gospel, left, as stewards of the manifold grace of God, they should receive it in vain, and have their future condemnation aggravated by their present advantages, as neglected or abused? 3. Will the time

of our stewardship have an end? What a value should we put upon it, as a season in which we are to act for eternity. 4. The believer has no reason to faint under the difficulties of his stewardship; seeing it will have an end, a most desirable one; and neither the services nor sufferings of the present time are worthy to be compared to the glory to be revealed. 5. When our stewardship ends, must an account be given up? It is hence evident, that the soul survives the body, and is capable of acting and of being dealt with in a way of wrath or mercy, according to the state in which it goes away; and hereupon—6. How great and important a thing is it to die; it being to go in spirit to appear before God, and give an account of all that we have done in the body, and to be dealt with accordingly? What is consequent upon it? (*Daniel Wilcox.*) *Faithful stewardship* :—In this parable the man was dispossessed from his place because he wasted goods which did not belong to him. He had been in various ways careless. The particular nature of his carelessness is not specified; but this is specified—that he was to be dispossessed because he was not faithful in the management of the property of another. Our subject, then, is: The use of funds not your own, but intrusted to your administration or keeping. Men think they have a complete case when they say, “Here is a power in my hand for a definite end, and I shall use it for that end; but I find that it is a power which may accomplish more than that: it can do good for more than the owner. I can use it and derive benefit from it. I can also benefit the community by my operations. Besides, it will never be known. Therefore men who are weaker than I will not be tempted by my example to do the same thing. It will never injure the owner, it will help me, through me it will benefit many others, and no evil shall come from it.” This would seem to make the thing secure; but let us examine the matter. 1. It would not be honest, and therefore it would not be wise, to use other people’s property for our own benefit, secretly, even if it were safe. If it did them no harm, if it did you good, and if nobody knew it, it would not be honest. You have no business to do it under any circumstances. And it does not make it any better that you have managerial care over property. In that event the sin is even greater; for you are bound to see to it that it is used for the purposes for which it was committed to your trust, and not for anything aside from that. 2. No man has a right to put property that is not his own to all the risks of commerce. What if a man thus employing trust funds does expect, what if he does mean, so and so? That is nothing. He might as well throw a babe out of a second-story window, and say that he hoped it would lodge in some tree and not be hurt, as to endanger the property of others held in trust by him, and say that he hopes it will not come to any harm. What has that to do with it? The chances are against its being safe. 3. No man has a right to put his own character for integrity and honesty upon a commercial venture. No man has a right to enter upon an enterprise where, if he succeeds, he may escape, but where, if he fails, he is ruined not simply in pocket, but in character; and yet this is what every man does who uses trust funds for his own purposes. He takes the risk of destroying himself in the eyes of honest men. He places his own soul in jeopardy. 4. No man has a right to put in peril the happiness, welfare, and good name of his family, of the neighbourhood, of the associates and friends with whom he has walked, of the Church with which he is connected, of his partners in business, of all that have been related to him. 5. No man has a right to undermine the security of property on which the welfare of individuals of the community depends in any degree. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The Sunday-school teacher—a steward* :—I. First, then, THE STEWARD. WHAT IS HE? 1. In the first place the steward is a servant. He is one of the greatest of servants, but he is only a servant. No, we are nothing better than stewards, and we are to labour for our Master in heaven. 2. But still while the steward is a servant, he is an honourable one. Now, those who serve Christ in the office of teaching, are honourable men and women. 3. The steward is also a servant who has very great responsibility attached to his position. A sense of responsibility seems to a right man always a weighty thing. II. And now, THE ACCOUNT—“Give an account of thy stewardship.” Let us briefly think of this giving an account of our stewardship. 1. Let us first notice that when we shall come to give an account of our stewardship before God, that account must be given in personally by every one of us. While we are here, we talk in the mass; but when we come before God, we shall have to speak as individuals. 2. And note again, that while this account must be personal it must be exact. You will not, when you present your account before God, present the gross total, but every separate item. 3. Now remember, once again, that the

account must be complete. You will not be allowed to leave out something, you will not be allowed to add anything. III. And now, though there are many other things I might say, I fear lest I might weary you, therefore let me notice some occasions when it will be **WELL** for you all to give an account of your stewardship; and then notice when you must give an account of it. You know there is a proverb that "short reckonings make long friends," and a very true proverb it is. A man will always be at friendship with his conscience as long as he makes short reckonings with it. It was a good rule of the old Puritans, that of making frank and full confession of sin every night; not to leave a week's sin to be confessed on Saturday night, or Sabbath morning, but to recall the failures, imperfections, and mistakes of the day, in order that we might learn from one day of failure how to achieve the victory on the morrow. Then, there are times which Providence puts in your way, which will be excellent seasons for reckoning. For instance, every time a boy or girl leaves the school, there is an opportunity afforded you of thinking. Then there is a peculiar time for casting up accounts when a child dies. But if you do not do it then, I will tell you when you must; that is when you come to die.

(*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *A certain rich man had a steward:*—We learn here incidentally, how evenly balanced are the various conditions of life in a community, and how little of substantial advantage wealth can confer on its possessor. As your property increases, your personal control over it diminishes; the more you possess, the more you must entrust to others. Those who do their own work are not troubled with disobedient servants; those who look after their own affairs are not troubled with unfaithful overseers. (*W. Arnot.*) Give an account of thy stewardship.—*An account demanded:*—1. An account of the blessings received, children of prosperity. 2. An account of the fruit of trial, members of the school of suffering! 3. An account of the time measured out to you, sons of mortality! 4. An account of the message of salvation received, ye that are shined upon by that light which is most cheering! (*Van Oosterzee.*) How much owest thou unto my Lord?—*The obligations of Great Britain to the gospel:*—I. Our first appeal must be made to rest upon the **BROAD BASIS OF OUR PRIVILEGES AS A NATION.** How much, I ask, do we of this land owe to the God of all mercies, as inheritors of the noble patrimony of a constitutional government; as dwelling under the shadow of equal law; as enriched with a commerce which allies us with the most distant extremities of the earth; as honoured, in the great brotherhood of nations, for our literature, for our science, for our vanguard position in all the ennobling arts of life; as rich in agencies for promoting the physical and moral happiness of all classes of our people, providing for the young, the old, the fallen, the outcast—for the poor a shelter, and for the sick a home; as enjoying a liberty of thought and conscience, free as the winds which sweep round our shores, and yet as having a governing power over the opinions of other nations, which controls more than half the world?

For how much of such blessings we are indebted to our Christianity, we may admit, it is not easy to determine. Here, then, I rest my first appeal to your gratitude as possessors of a national Christianity. Religion, says Burke, is the basis of civil society, and education in its truths is the chief defence of nations. It hallows the sanctions of law. It puts the seal of heaven on social order. It ministers to learning and the liberal arts. It strengthens the foundations of civil liberty. It refines the habits of domestic life. It makes each home that embraces it a centre of blessing to the neighbourhood, and every country that adorns and honours it a centre of light unto the world. And this is the religion which by the gospel is preached unto you. "How much owest thou unto my Lord?" II. But let me urge a claim upon your gratitude, in the next place, **ARISING OUT OF THAT PURE AND REFORMED FAITH, WHICH IN THIS COUNTRY IT IS OUR PRIVILEGE TO ENJOY.** "How much owest thou unto thy lord," for the glorious light and liberty of the Protestant faith, for the recovered independence of our ancient British Church, for the Protestantism of Ridley, and Latimer, Jewel, and other faithful men, who witnessed for the truth of God by their teaching, and some of them with their blood? 1. How much do we owe for a permanent standard of religious faith—for a "form of sound words" which yet bows implicitly to the decision of the sacred oracles to approve its soundness? 2. Again, how much do we owe for the clearer views—brought out anew as it were from the concealment and dust of ages—of the method of a sinner's acceptance and justification, through faith in the merits of Christ to deliver, and by the influences of His Spirit to restore. 3. Again, we owe much to the men of those times for their vindication of the great principles of political and religious freedom, and the services thereby rendered to the cause of moral progress in the world.

III. I must not conclude, brethren, without urging upon you one form of gratitude, which, to those who have experience of it, will be far more constraining than any I have yet brought before you, I mean THE DEBT WHICH YOU OWE TO THE GOD OF ALL GRACE AS BEING YOURSELVES PARTAKERS OF THE SPIRIT AND HOPES OF THE GOSPEL. And I ask how much owest thou for a part in Christ, for a sense of forgiveness, for the weight lifted off the burdened conscience. (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *The universality of debt to God*.—I. I turn at first to THE ESTABLISHED CHRISTIAN and ask, How much owest thou unto my Lord? II. Is any here A LOVER OF PLEASURE MORE THAN A LOVER OF GOD? How much owest thou unto my Lord? "He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." O will ye defraud Jesus of the travail of His soul, by making an idol of the world and bowing down before it as before your God? III. Are any among you offending God, BY DISREGARD OF HIS LAWS, OR UNBELIEF OF HIS GREAT SALVATION. IV. There are persons who have DECLINED IN RELIGION. "Ye did run well, who hath hindered you?" O take with you words of penitence and sorrow, and turn to the Lord your God. V. Once more. LET ME ADDRESS THE AFFLICTED SERVANT OF CHRIST, and say, How much owest thou unto my Lord? (*R. P. Buddicom.*) *Man's debt to his Maker*.—I. I might remind you, in the first place, of our obligations to God, AS CREATURES OF HIS HAND. He not only made us, but He preserves us; "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." Are there no obligations that we have incurred, in consequence of our constant reception of these varied mercies at the hands of God? II. But I proceed to take another view of our subject, and to remind you HOW WE ARE INDEBTED TO GOD AS SINNERS AGAINST HIS RIGHTEOUS LAW. You will remember that the blessed Saviour teaches us to look upon sins in the light of debts. Surely there is none present who would have the hardihood to say that he owes nothing (*Jer. ii. 22, 23*). III. Let me remind you next, OF DUTIES THAT HAVE BEEN NEGLECTED. Alas! how long a list might here be made, in the catalogue of unworthiness, ingratitude, and guilt! To say nothing of our unprofitableness, under the public ordinances and means of grace, what says conscience as to our daily communion with God in privacy and retirement? IV. I must remind you, further, OF OPPORTUNITIES THAT HAVE BEEN UNIMPROVED. We have, first, the opportunities of gaining good, and then the opportunities of doing good. V. But there is yet another view of our subject. How much do we owe unto Him, as those who have hopes of pardon through His mercy in Christ Jesus? (*W. Cadman, M.A.*) *Owing to God*.—A merchant, who was a God-fearing man, was very successful in business, but his soul did not seem to prosper accordingly; his offerings to the Lord he did not feel disposed to increase. One evening he had a remarkable dream; a visitor entered the apartment, and quietly looking round at the many elegancies and luxuries by which he was surrounded, without any comment, presented him with the receipts for his subscriptions to various societies, and urged their claims upon his enlarged sympathy. The merchant replied with various excuses, and at last grew impatient at the continued appeals. The stranger rose, and fixing his eye on his companion, said, in a voice that thrilled to his soul, "One year ago to-night, you thought that your daughter lay dying; you could not rest for agony. Upon whom did you call that night?" The merchant started and looked up; there seemed a change to have passed over the whole form of his visitor, whose eye was fixed upon him with a calm, penetrating look, as he continued—"Five years ago, when you lay at the brink of the grave, and thought that if you died then, you would leave a family unprovided for—do you remember how you prayed then? Who saved you then?" Pausing a moment, he went on in a lower and still more impressive tone—"Do you remember, fifteen years since, that time when you felt yourself so lost, so helpless, so hopeless; when you spent day and night in prayer; when you thought you would give the world for one hour's assurance that your sins were forgiven—who listened to you then?" "It was my God and Saviour!" said the merchant, with a sudden burst of remorseful feeling; "oh yes, it was He!" "And has He ever complained of being called on too often?" inquired the stranger, in a voice of reproachful sweetness. "Say—are you willing to begin this night, and ask no more of Him, if He, from this time, will ask no more of you?" "Oh, never! never!" said the merchant, throwing himself at his feet. The figure vanished, and he awoke; his whole soul stirred within him. "O God and Saviour! what have I been doing! Take all—take everything! What is all that I have, to what Thou hast done for me?"

Ver. 8. And the Lord commended the unjust steward.—*The unjust steward teaching a lesson of prudence*.—I. How INTIMATELY MIXED UP WITH EACH OTHER ARE

VIRTUES AND VICES, GOOD AND EVIL, IN THIS HUMAN WORLD. In fact, no bad man is without some redeeming quality; and no good man (who is merely man) is without some taint or defect that mars the harmony and soils the whiteness of character. In the best men there is something to regret; in the worst there is something to admire and to imitate. What, *e.g.*, can possibly be worse than the general conduct of this steward? Here he is treated with generous confidence by his employer, and he is guilty first of a carelessness in dealing with his master's property, which amounts to a breach of trust, and next of a deliberate effort to gain credit for personal generosity, and to make provision for his own future by falsifying the bonds in his keeping, which represent debts due to his employer. The man's moral nature, we say, must have utterly broken down, before such conduct could have been possible; and yet our Lord discerns an excellence glittering amidst this moral darkness. He puts forth His hand, and He isolates from the corruption which surrounds it in the steward's character, and He lifts up on high that it may be admired and copied in Christendom to the very end of time one single virtue—the virtue of prudence. II. THE HIGH RELIGIOUS VALUE OF PRUDENCE; its need and function in relation to the life and future of the soul. Prudence is in man what providence is in Almighty God. Its great characteristic is, that it keeps its eye upon what is coming; it looks forward to the future that really awaits us. What is that future? Nothing, most assuredly, nothing that lies within the compass of the few years, if indeed, there are to be a few years, that will precede our disappearance from this visible scene, but the existence beyond, of whatever character it be, to which, so far as we know, there is neither term nor limit. We know what to think of the men who trifle with baubles when great earthly interests are trembling in the balance, in those solemn moments which come and pass, and come not again, the moments on which all depends. Who can forget Carlyle's description of the unhappy Louis XVI., when, in his endeavour to escape from the triumphant revolution, he was brought to a standstill by the suspicious officiousness of some of the petty local authorities of Varennes? A little nerve would have enabled the king to escape the barrier that his enemies had thrown across the public road, by making a slight circuit in his carriage through the adjoining fields, and in twenty minutes or half an hour he would have been safe among his friends; and the course of his own life and all European history might have been very different, to say the least, from the event. But he hesitated, and hesitation was ruin. He hesitated, and as they showed him into the parlour of the village inn he discussed, with the good-humoured courtesy that belonged to him, the precise quality of the burgundy that was placed upon the table. But meanwhile events outside were shaping themselves irrevocably into the fatal grooves of that long procession of humiliation and suffering which ended with the guillotine. This life, for many of us, is the halt at Varennes. It is incumbent on us first of all to feel how immense are the issues that depend on the use we make of its fleeting moments. We must bear in mind that its opportunities are as brief as the consequences that depend on them are incalculable. This power of anticipating the reality, the reality as distinct from the appearance, is the first ingredient of religious prudence. We, too, have the sentence of dismissal hanging over us; but do we understand what it means, as did the unjust steward in the parable? For the second business of prudence is to take measures to prepare for that which is coming on us, and to lose no time in doing so. We must not let things drift, and trust for a good issue to some imaginary chapter of accident; we must make friends, as did the steward, who will receive us in this new future into their houses. And who are those friends? Clearly the friends suggested by the parable are the poor. The story of Fernandez de Cordova, who wrapped up in his robe the leper who was lying deserted by all men on the roadside, and who set him down on his bed to find indeed that he had passed away, but also to trace on his brow, on his hands, on his feet, the marks of His sacred passion, embodies why the poor can be said to be received into everlasting habitations. They are not alone, they are identified with One who has shared their sufferings without sharing their weakness; and who knows well how to reward that which is done to Himself in them. Yes, most assuredly, one Friend there is whose power to help us is without limit. He can help us through our passage to our new home, for He died that by His death He might destroy him that hath the power of death, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. And He can provide for us when we get there, since among His parting words were these: "In My Father's house," &c. Are our relations with Him such as to warrant our claiming His help in the hour of need? (*Canon Liddon.*) *Lessons*

from the children of this world:—1. From their sagacity learn to forecast how to please God; to forearm ourselves against all assaults and wiles of Satan; to forethink, and to be in some measure provided beforehand of needful and proper expedients for any exigent or cross accident that may probably befall us. 2. From their industry learn not to be slothful in doing service, not to slack the time of our repentance and turning to God; to run with constancy and courage the race that is set before us; to think no pains, no travel, too much, that may bring us to heaven; to work out our salvation to the uttermost with fear and trembling. 3. From their hypocrisy and outward seeming holiness learn to have our conversations honest towards them that are without, not giving the least scandal in anything that may bring reproach upon the gospel; to shun the very appearances of evil; and having first cleansed the inside well, to keep the outside handsome too, that by our piety, devotion, meekness, patience, obedience, justice, charity, humility, and all holy graces, we may not only stop up the mouth of the adversary from speaking evil of us, but may also win glory to God, and honour and reputation to our Christian profession thereby. 4. From their unity learn to follow the truth in love, to lay aside vain janglings, and opposition of science falsely so called; to make up the breaches that are in the Church of Christ, by moderating and reconciling differences, rather than to widen them by multiplying controversies, and maintaining hot disputes; to follow the things that make for peace, and whereby we may edify one another. This doing, we may gather grapes of thorns; make oil of scorpions; extract all the medicinal virtue out of the serpent, and yet leave all the poisonous and malignant quality behind. (*Bishop Sanderson.*) *Ninth Sunday after Trinity*:—It was a piece of sheer rascality from beginning to end. There was no honesty in the man. He was out and out a child of this world—an example of the bad faith and base principles which govern in those who have no fear of God before their eyes. Though he did most unjustly, he yet did “wisely.” There was a cunning, skill, calculation, farsightedness, and perfection of adjustment of means to his ends, worthy of all praise, if only it had been used in a better cause. And it is just here that we find the chief point in this parable. Separating the morality of the deed from the wit that directed it, the Saviour fixes upon the skill and prudence of this unjust man as an illustration of the foresight and calculation which should mark our conduct with reference to the necessities that are upon us in relation to eternity. There are three things specially noticeable in the case of this shrewd villain, in which his example furnishes copy for our imitation. 1. He considerably directed his thoughts towards the future. His worldliness and wickedness we are of course to eschew. But as he looked forward to his needs when his stewardship was ended, so are we to have respect to the solemn realities of the judgment and another life. 2. The unjust steward was also very diligent in improving his time, and making the most of his opportunities. If ever there was energy in him, it was now called into the fullest activity. Here was wisdom. Had he waited, postponed, delayed, the opportunity would have passed. O that miserable delusion, Time enough yet! How many has it utterly and irremediably ruined! 3. The unjust steward made very efficient use of very transient possessions. The control of his master's estates was in process of passing for ever from his hands. But he was wise enough to make them yet tell for his advantage in the beyond. And in allusion to this the Saviour says, “Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness”; that is, of the deceitful and fleeting riches of this world; “that when ye fail they may receive you”—or, ye may be received—“into everlasting habitations.” There is nothing so fleeting and uncertain as riches. But fleeting, deceptive, and uncertain as they are, so long as they are in our hands, they may be turned to good account, and made to tell advantageously upon our eternal peace. We cannot buy admission into heaven with money. But we can add to our blessedness with money, and attain to higher rewards in heaven by a right disposition of the possessions of this life. “He that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord”; and the same shall be returned again with interest. “The liberal soul shall be made fat.” Closehanded miserliness, and reckless waste and speculation, are as sinful and incompatible with piety, as profaneness and unbelief. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*) *Worldlings an example to Christians*:—I. THEY RECOGNIZE MORE CLEARLY THE NECESSITY OF PERSONAL EFFORT TO ENSURE SUCCESS. It was so with this unjust steward. Must do something. It is so with the politician, lawyer, business man. Instead of merely hoping, wishing, they put their shoulder to the wheel. II. THEY RECOGNIZE MORE CLEARLY THE NEED OF THOUGHT, REFLECTION, ON THE METHODS TO BE ADOPTED. III. THEY ARE MORE WILLING TO MAKE PERSONAL SACRIFICES. IV. THEY MORE FREQUENTLY MAKE

SELF-EXAMINATION. Take stock. See whether they are advancing or going backward. (*J. Ogle.*) *The wisdom of making provision for the future.*—I. IT IS PART OF GREAT WISDOM TO PROVIDE FOR THE FUTURE. 1. This appears by the care and practice of all wise, rational men. 2. It appears by the care and labour of irrational or mere animal creatures. 3. It appears to be a point of great wisdom, because God Himself bewails the folly of His people of old upon this respect (Deut. xxxii. 29). 4. It must needs be great wisdom to provide for the future well-being of our souls, because all that were ever esteemed to be wise before or above all other things preferred this matter (Heb. xi. 25, 26; 2 Cor. iv. 18). 5. Because there is no avoiding our entering into an endless state of joy or sorrow. 6. Because the soul far exceeds in worth the body and all things in this world. 7. Because God from eternity studied and provided for the future good of our souls and bodies for ever. 8. Consider how soon I or any may fail, how soon the youngest may like a flower fade away; it may be this year, this month, this week, nay, this night. 9. If you are not provided for your future state, consider how dismal at death your state will be. Is it not the highest wisdom to prevent or seek to escape the greatest evil, and be possessed of the greatest good? 10. Consider that God has found out a way to make us happy for ever; and observe what promises He has made to such as before all things seek the kingdom of heaven and His righteousness. 11. How have many thousands bewailed their great folly in not providing for the time to come!

II. WHAT FUTURE TIME IS IT SUCH WISDOM TO PROVIDE FOR? 1. Against that time when the means of grace may fail, or all provision for the future may utterly be out off, or our understanding fail. 2. The hour of death. 3. The day of judgment.

III. SHOW WHEREIN A WISE AND PRUDENT CARE TO PROVIDE FOR THE FUTURE CONSISTS. 1. We ought to think of our future state, into which we shall and must pass, when the soul shall be separated from the body. (1) Think of the certainty of a future state of joy or sorrow. (2) The nearness of it. 2. Consider the necessity of your knowing Christ, or of being united to Him by faith; for unless you truly believe in Jesus Christ, you cannot be prepared for the time to come. 3. This wisdom consists in a careful use of the means God affords, and has ordained, in order to faith, or a sinner's believing in Christ Jesus. (1) Prayer. (2) The hearing of the Word (Isa. xlii. 23). Conclusion: 1. This reproves such as pursue the world as if they came into it for no other end but to eat and drink and heap a little white and yellow earth. 2. It reproves such as prefer the world above the Word, and the body above the soul. 3. It reproves such as put the evil day afar off, as if we spoke of things that will be long before they come. 4. It commends those who are heavenly, it shows the saints only are truly wise. (*B. Keach.*)

Lessons that the Church may learn from the world.—Note some respects in which the world shames the Church. 1. There is the clearness of vision with which the worldly man perceives the object of his pursuit. 2. There is the unremitting effort with which, in relation to the attainment of this world's good, men pursue their object. Religion is not so real to most of us as markets and money are to merchants. 3. Think how careful men of the world are to use all their resources for the attainment of their end. No drones. No square men in round holes. 4. Think how determinedly the children of this world refuse to be deterred from prosecuting their schemes by the temporary failure of their efforts. 5. Is it not true that even the children of light themselves prosecute their worldly affairs in far more vigorous fashion than their religious duties? Does not care sometimes well-nigh crowd prayer out of our lives? Are we not all too prone to count our own private business that which *must* be done, and God's work that which *may* be done? (*J. R. Bailey.*)

An example of wisdom from the unjust steward.—I. THE WISDOM OF THIS WORLD. There are three classes of men. Those who believe that one thing is needful, and choose the better part, who believe in and live for eternity; these are not mentioned here: those who believe in the world, and live for it: and those who believe in eternity, and half live for the world. Forethought for self made the steward ask himself, "What shall I do?" Here is the thoughtful, contriving, sagacious man of the world. In the affairs of this world, the man who does not provide for self, if he enter into competition with the world on the world's principles, soon finds himself thrust aside; he will be put out. It becomes necessary to jostle and struggle in the great crowd if he would thrive. With him it is not, first the kingdom of God; but first, what he shall eat, and what he shall drink, and where-withal shall he be clothed. Note the kind of superiority in this character that is commended. There are certain qualities which really do elevate a man in the scale of being. He who pursues a plan steadily is higher than he who lives by the hour.

You cannot but respect such an one. The value of self-command and self-denial is exemplified in the cases of the diplomatist who masters his features while listening; the man of pleasure who is prudent in his pleasures; the man of the world who keeps his temper and guards his lips. How often, after speaking hastily the thought which was uppermost, and feeling the cheek burn, you have looked back in admiration on some one who held his tongue even though under great provocation to speak. II. In contrast with the wisdom of the children of this world, the Redeemer shows THE INCONSISTENCIES OF THE CHILDREN OF LIGHT. Now the want of Christian wisdom consists in this, that our stewardship is drawing to a close, and no provision is made for an eternal future. We are all stewards. Every day, every age of life, every year, gives us superintendence over something which we have to use, and the use of which tells for good or evil on eternity. Childhood and manhood pass. The day passes: and, as its close draws near, the Master's voice is heard—"Thou mayest be no longer steward." And what are all these outward symbols but types and reminders of the darker, longer night that is at hand? One by one, we are turned out of all our homes. The summons comes. The man lies down on his bed for the last time; and then comes that awful moment, the putting down the extinguisher on the light, and the grand rush of darkness on the spirit. Let us now consider our Saviour's application of this parable. There are two expressions to be explained. 1. "Mammon of unrighteousness." Mammon is the name of a Syrian god, who presided over wealth. Mammon of unrighteousness means the god whom the unrighteous worship—wealth. It is not necessarily gold. Any wealth; wealth being weal or well-being. Time, talents, opportunity, and authority, all are wealth. Here the steward had influence. It is called the mammon of unrighteousness, because it is ordinarily used, not well, but ill. Power corrupts men. Riches harden more than misfortune. 2. "Make to yourselves friends." Wise arts, holy and unselfish deeds, secure friends. Wherever the steward went he found a friend. The acts of his beneficence were spread over the whole of his master's estate. Go where he would, he would receive a welcome. In this way our good actions become our friends. And if it be no dream which holy men have entertained, that on this regenerated earth the risen spirits shall live again in glorified bodies, then it were a thing of sublime anticipation, to know that every spot hallowed by the recollection of a deed done for Christ, contains a recollection which would be a friend. Just as the patriarchs erected an altar when they felt God to be near, till Palestine became dotted with these memorials, so would earth be marked by a good man's life with those holiest of all friends, the remembrance of ten thousand little nameless acts of piety and love. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *The superiority of the worldly man's wisdom to the godly man's*.—I. Our first object is to ESTABLISH THE FACT, THAT "THE CHILDREN OF THIS WORLD ARE WISER IN THEIR GENERATION THAN THE CHILDREN OF LIGHT." We hold unreservedly, in both these respects, the wisdom of "the children of this world" is a vast deal more conspicuous than the wisdom of "the children of light." You need only cast your eye over the busy group of the world's population, and you will observe for the most part a fixedness of purpose which is altogether admirable. If a man have turned his desires on the amassing of money, he will not be driven aside, even for a solitary moment, from the business of accumulation; it will be plain to all around him, that he is literally given up to the influence of one engrossing and domineering passion; and if pleasure and ambition do exert over him authority, they are but tributaries to the prominent desire, and in no sense the principal in the empire of his heart. The case is exactly the same with the man of ambition: he has fastened his wishes on some lofty point in the scale of human preferment, and it is not the syren voice of voluptuousness, and it is not the stern ruggedness of the upward path, by which he can be induced to turn away his eagle glance from the shadowy prize which floats above him. But if we turn from "the children of this world" to "the children of light," we shall not find the fixedness and constancy of purpose which we see indicated in "the children of the world." But we go on to observe, in the second place, that wisdom is to be discovered in the choice and employment of means as well as in fixedness and constancy of purpose; and thus we think in this respect the comparison will go against "the children of light." You cannot fail to observe among the men of the world a singular shrewdness in finding out the methods most likely to effect their designs, and as singular a diligence in trying and adapting them. You will see nothing irrelevant, nothing which in all probability is likely to frustrate in place of forwarding, no risks run unless the chances of advantage do more than apparently counterbalance the chances of damage. You

will not find them endangering their property by exposing it to sharpers, as a Christian does his piety by bringing it in contact with unrighteousness. You will not observe them so dull of apprehension, when there are opportunities of personal aggrandizement to be improved, as religious men appear when God affords them occasions to become better acquainted with Himself. You will not detect in them that indiscreetness in making associations with parties who are not likely to help them, which you see in believers running heedlessly into fellowship with unbelievers. The complaint of the prophet has lost nothing of its force in coming down through a succession of centuries; "Men are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge." And if in the choice of means, pre-eminence of wisdom must be denied to "the children of light," then in the employment of means we fear they still less can be held supreme. If you take "the children of light" in the Church where they are professedly giving their whole soul to the service of God, and take "the children of this world" on the exchange, when avowedly occupied with their temporal aggrandizement, on which side will you find the most devoted attention to the business in hand? If you take "the children of light," when met by difficulties in their heavenward career, and "the children of the world" when stopped in the path of human preferment, which will set themselves with the most out and out energy to overleap the impediments? If you take "the children of light" when scoffers are around them jeering their piety, and "the children of the world" when sarcasms are being passed on covetousness or ambition, which will be most moved?

II. We come now to INVESTIGATE THE CAUSES TO WHICH THE SUPERIORITY UNDER REVIEW MAY BE LEGITIMATELY TRACED. In the first place it would seem well-nigh impossible that the delights of the next world should exert as powerful and pervading an influence as the delights of the present world, which address themselves directly to our senses. "The children of the world" have nothing to do but to follow the dictates of their senses; while we do almost say, that "the children of light" begin by doing violence to their senses. And thus, while worldly men may bring mind and body, and life together to the pursuit of their end, godly men have the body as well as the mind from the outset to the termination of their career to combat with; and if it be lawful to bring forward these truths, by way of excuse they may clearly be adduced, as accounting for the fact that the ungodly exhibit greater constancy of purpose than the godly; or in other words, that "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." Again, the unrighteous have only to do with one world; whereas the righteous have necessarily to do with two worlds. If I make the amassing of wealth my end, I may give to it an undivided and an undistracted attention, I concern not myself with the things of eternity; and what then shall interfere with my pressing on in the pursuit of the things of time? It is widely different with "the children of light." There must be earthly matters just as well as heavenly matters which require their attention; they cannot detach themselves from commerce, or from labour, or from study, and care only for the soul as if there were no body to provide for, just as the worldly care only for the body as if there were no soul to provide for; and though it may be perfectly true, according to some of our foregoing remarks, that the minor interests may be, and ought to be, made subservient to the major; it is equally true that the difficulty is almost incalculable of so using the present world as not to abuse it, and following the occupations of earth with the dispositions of heaven. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

The children of this world wiser than the children of light:—The words are a comparison, in which we have—1. The persons compared, "the children of this world," and "the children of light." It is a very usual phrase among the Hebrews, when they would express anything to partake of such a nature or quality, to call it the son or child of such a thing. Thus good men are called "the children of God," and bad men "the children of the devil"; those who mind earthly things, and make the things of this world their greatest aim and design, are called "the children of this world"; and those who are better enlightened with the knowledge of their own immortality, and the belief of a future state after this life, are called "the children of light." 2. Here is the thing wherein they are compared, and that is, as to their wisdom and prudence. 3. The object of this prudence, which is not the same in both; as if the sense were that "the children of this world are wiser than the children of light" as to the things of this world; but here are two several objects intended, about which the prudence of these two sorts of persons is respectively exercised, the concerns of this world and the other; and our Saviour's meaning is, "that the children of this world are wiser in their generation," that is, in their way; viz., as to the interests and concerns of this world, "than the

children of light" are in theirs; viz., as to the interests and concerns of the other world. 4. Here is a decision of the matter, and which of them it is that excels in point of prudence, in their way; and our Saviour gives it to the "children of this world"; they "are wiser in their generation than the children of light."

I. I SHALL ENDEAVOUR TO CONFIRM AND ILLUSTRATE THE TRUTH OF THIS, BY CONSIDERING THE SEVERAL PARTS AND PROPERTIES OF WISDOM. 1. They are usually more firmly fixed and resolved upon their end. Whatever they set up for their end, riches, or honours, or pleasures, they are fixed upon it, and steady in the prosecution of it.

2. "The children of this world" are wiser in the choice of means in order to their end; and this is a great part of wisdom, for some means will bring about an end with less pains, and difficulty, and expense of time than others. 3. "The children of this world" are commonly more diligent in the use of means for the obtaining of their end; they will sweat and toil, and take any pains, "rise up early, and lie down late, and eat the bread of carefulness"; their thoughts are continually running upon their business, and they catch at every opportunity of promoting it; they will pinch nature, and harass it; and rob themselves of their rest, and all the comfort of their lives, to raise their fortune and estate.

4. The men of the world are more invincibly constant and pertinacious in the pursuit of earthly things; they are not to be bribed or taken off by favour or fair words; not to be daunted by difficulties, or dashed out of countenance by the frowns and reproaches of men. 5. The men of the world will make all things stoop and submit to that which is their great end and design; their end rules them, and governs them, and gives laws to all their actions; they will make an advantage of everything, and if it will not serve their end one way or other, they will have nothing to do with it.

II. GIVE SOME PROBABLE ACCOUNT OF THIS BY CONSIDERING WHAT ADVANTAGES "THE CHILDREN OF THIS WORLD" HAVE ABOVE "THE CHILDREN OF LIGHT." 1. The things of this world are present and sensible, and, because of their nearness to us, are apt to strike powerfully upon our senses, and to affect us mightily, to excite our desires after them, and to work strongly upon our hopes and fears: but the things of another world being remote from us, are lessened by their distance, and consequently are not apt to work so powerfully upon our minds.

2. The sensual delights and enjoyments of this world are better suited, and more agreeable to the corrupt and degenerate nature of men, than spiritual and heavenly things are to those that are regenerate. 3. The worldly man's faith and hope, and fear of present and sensible things, is commonly stronger than a good man's faith and hope, and fear of things future and eternal. Now faith, and hope, and fear, are the great principles which govern and bear sway in the actions and lives of men.

4. The men of the world have but one design, and are wholly intent upon it, and this is a great advantage. Application to one thing, especially in matters of practice, gains a man perfect experience in it, and experience furnisheth him with observations about it, and these make him wise and prudent in that thing. But good men, though they have a great affection for heaven and heavenly things, yet the business and necessities of this life do very much divert and take them off from the care of better things; they are divided between the concerns of this life and the other, and though there be but one thing necessary in comparison, yet the conveniences of this life are to be regarded; and though our souls be our main care, yet some consideration must be had of our bodies, that they may be fit for the service of our souls; so that we cannot always and wholly apply ourselves to heavenly things, and mind them as the men of the world do the things of this world.

5. The men of the world have a greater compass and liberty in the pursuit of their worldly designs, than good men have in the prosecution of their interests. The "children of light" are limited and confined to the use of lawful means for the compassing of their ends; but the men of the world are not so strait-laced; they are resolved upon the point, and will stick at no means to compass their end.

Concluding remarks: 1. Notwithstanding the commendation which hath been given of the wisdom of this world, yet upon the whole matter it is not much to be valued and admired. It is, indeed, great in its way and kind; but it is applied to little and low purposes, employed about the concerns of a short time and a few days, about the worst and meanest part of ourselves, and accompanied with the neglect of greater and better things. This is wisdom, to regard our main interest; but if we be wrong in our end (as all worldly men are), the faster and farther we go, the more fatal is our error and mistake.

"The children of this world" are out in their end, and mistaken in the main; they are wise for this world, which is inconsiderable to eternity; wise for a little while, and fools for ever.

2. From what hath been said, we may infer, that if we lose our

souls, and come short of eternal happiness, it is through our own fault and gross neglect; for we see that men are wise enough for this world; and the same prudence, and care, and diligence, applied to the concerns of our souls, would infallibly make us happy. 3. What a shame and reproach is this to the children of light! (*Archbishop Tillotson.*) *Sagacity commended*:—It is merely the wisdom, the practical sagacity, the *savoir faire* of the steward that is commended to our attention and imitation. A bad thing may be well done. The most admirable qualities—industry, perseverance, bravery, quickness—may serve to accomplish a wicked as well as a righteous purpose. Few can withhold a tribute of applause from the forger who successfully copies a very difficult bank-note, or elaborates a professedly mediæval document so as to deceive even the experts. No one commends the morality of David when he played the madman at Gath, and scrambled on the gate; but who has not smiled at his skill in meeting the occasion, in overreaching all his enemies, and making them serve him by the simple device of hiding the brightest intellect of the age under the vacant, silly stare of the idiot? The wisdom of the unjust steward, which we are invited to admire, appeared mainly in his business-like apprehension of the actual situation in which he was placed, and his sagacity and promptitude in making the most of it. He looked the facts in the face. He did not buoy himself up with delusive hopes. He did not waste his brief opportunity in idle expectations. He manfully faced the inevitable, and this was his salvation. The ability to do so is a great part of what is known as a strong character (*Marcus Dods, D.D.*) *The true wisdom*:—Our Lord pronounced the children of this world “wise in their generation”; and who can doubt that thousands who are lost would, with God’s blessing, be saved, did they bring the same prudence, and diligence, and energy to their eternal, as they do to their temporal interests? But in how many people is consummate wisdom joined to the greatest folly? They are wise enough to gain the world, and fools enough to lose their souls. Convince a man that the only way to save his life is to part with his limb, and he does not hesitate an instant between living with one limb and being buried with two. Borne into the operating theatre, pale, yet resolute, he bares the diseased member to the knife. And how well does that bleeding, fainting, groaning sufferer teach us to part with our sins rather than with our Saviour. If life is better than a limb, how much better is heaven than a sin? Two years ago a man was called to decide between preserving his life, and parting with the gains of his lifetime. A gold-digger, he stood on the deck of a ship that, coming from Australian shores, had—as some all but reach heaven—all but reached her harbour in safety. The exiles had been coasting along their native shores: and to-morrow, husbands would embrace their wives, children their parents, and not a few realize the bright dream of returning to pass the evening of their days in happiness amid the loved scenes of their youth. But as the proverb runs, there is much between the cup and the lip. Night came lowering down; and with the night a storm that wrecked ship, and hopes, and fortunes, all together. The dawning light but revealed a scene of horror—death staring them in the face. The sea, lashed into fury, ran mountains high; no boat could live in her. One chance still remained. Pale women, weeping children, feeble and timid men must die; but a stout, brave swimmer, with trust in God, and disencumbered of all impediments, might reach the shore, where hundreds stood ready to dash into the boiling surf, and, seizing, save him. One man was observed to go below. He bound around his waist a heavy belt, filled with gold, the hard gains of his life; and returned to the deck. One after another, he saw his fellow-passengers leap overboard. After a brief but terrible struggle, head after head went down—sunk by the gold they had fought hard to gain, and were loth to lose. Slowly he was seen to unbuckle his belt. His hopes had been bound up in it. It was to buy him land, and ease, and respect—the reward of long years of hard and weary exile. What hardships he had endured for it! The sweat of his brow, the hopes of day and the dreams of night, were there. If he parts with it, he is a beggar; but then if he keeps it, he dies. He poised it in his hand; balanced it for a while; took a long, sad look at it; and then with one strong, desperate effort, flung it far out into the roaring sea. Wise man! It sinks with a sullen plunge; and now he follows it—not to sink, but, disencumbered of its weight, to swim; to beat the billows manfully; and, riding on the foaming surge, to reach the shore. Well done, brave gold-digger! Ay, well done, and well chosen; but if “a man,” as the devil said, who once spoke God’s truth, “will give all that he hath for his life,” how much more should he give all he hath for his soul? Better to part with gold than with God; to bear the heaviest cross than miss a heavenly crown! (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*)

Ver. 9. **Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.**—*The right use of unrighteous mammon*.—By the “mammon of unrighteousness” we are very clearly to understand money; but why it has been so called by Christ is not so evident. Perhaps the simplest, as it is certainly the most obvious explanation, is because it is so frequently unrighteously acquired, and so much more frequently as the man’s own possession, and not as a trust of which he is merely a steward. But, however the epithet “unrighteous” may be accounted for, the thing which it characterizes is money. Now, there is a time when that shall fail. Death says to each man, “Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.” We can carry with us nothing out of this world. Money cannot—simply and only as money—be transferred into the world beyond; but it may be so used in this world as to add to and intensify a Christian’s happiness in the next. We are familiar with the fact, in our daily lives here, that money may become the means of procuring that which is better than itself. Thus knowledge is better than wealth; yet by a wise use of wealth we may acquire knowledge. So, by a judicious employment of money as trustees for God, in communicating to the necessities of the saints, we shall secure that those whom we have thus relieved shall receive us into everlasting habitations. This use of money will not purchase our admission into heaven; but it will make friends for us there, whose gratitude will add to our enjoyment, and increase our blessedness. It will not open the gates for our entrance. Only Christ is the door. Through Him alone can we gain ingress. But it will affect what Peter calls the “abundance” of our entrance, for it will secure the presence there of those who have been benefited by our faithful stewardship; and, chiefest of all, it will be rewarded with the approbation of Him who will say, “Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me.” It is of grace alone, through Christ, that we are permitted to enter heaven; but once there, the measure of reward will be graduated according to that of our faithfulness here as “good stewards of the manifold bounties of God.” Those who have been helped and blessed by our service will lead us up to the throne, and say, “This is he of whom we have often spoken, and to whom we were so much beholden in the life below”; and He who sitteth thereon will reply, “Well done: let it be done unto him as unto the man whom the King delighteth to honour.” Thus, though money cannot be taken with us into the future life, we yet may so employ it here, in stewardship for God, as to send on treasure before us into heaven, in the shape of friends, who shall throughout eternity redouble and intensify our happiness. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *The mammon of unrighteousness*.—“Mammon” is just the Syrian word for money, and it is called “unrighteous” or “unjust” because those to whom our Lord was speaking had made their money by injustice. It was as little their own as the unjust steward’s was. The steward was unjust because he had not regarded himself as a steward; and in so far as we have forgotten this fundamental circumstance, we also are unjust. We may not have consciously wronged any man or defrauded any; but if we have omitted to consider what was due to God and man, the likelihood is we have more money than we have a right to. The name, indeed, “unrighteous mammon,” is sometimes sweepingly applied to all wealth and material advantages, because there is a feeling that the whole system of trade, commerce, and social life is inextricably permeated with fraudulent practices and iniquitous customs—so permeated that no man can be altogether free, or is at all likely to be altogether free, from all guilt in this matter. Take any coin out of your pocket and make it tell its history, the hands it has been in, the things it has paid for, the transactions it has assisted, and you would be inclined to fling it away as contaminated and filthy. But that coin is a mere emblem of all that comes to you through the ordinary channels of trade, and suggests to you the pollution of the whole social condition. The clothes you wear, the food you eat, the house you live in, the money you are asked to invest, have all a history which will not bear scrutiny. Oppression, greed, and fraud serve you every day. Whether you will or not you are made partakers of other men’s sins. You may be thankful if your hands are not soiled by any stain that you have wittingly incurred; but even so, you must ask, What compensation can I make for the unrighteousness which cleaves to mammon? how am I to use it now, seeing I have it? Our Lord says, “You are to make friends with it, who may receive you into everlasting habitations.” You are so to use your opportunities that when your present stewardship is over you may not be turned out in the cold and to beggary, but may have secured friends who will give you a welcome to the eternal world. It is the same view of the connection of this world

and the next which our Lord gives in His picture of the last judgment, when He says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it," &c. Those whom we have done most good to are, as a rule, those whom we have most loved; and what better welcome to a new world, what more grateful guidance in its ways, could we desire than that of those whom here on earth we have loved most dearly? Can you promise yourselves any better reward than to meet the loving recognition and welcome of those who have experienced your kindness; to be received by those to whom you have willingly sacrificed money, time, opportunities of serving yourself? (*Marcus Dods, D.D.*)

A profitable investment.—The old Jewish writers tell us of a certain avaricious Rabbi who was very anxious to invest his wealth to the best advantage. A friend undertook to do this for him. One day the Rabbi asked the name of the investment from which he was assured he would receive the highest interest. His friend answered, "I have given all your money to the poor." You know, that if you were going to take a journey into some foreign country, you would change your English money for the currency of the place to which you were bound. You would convert your sovereigns, and bank notes, and shillings, into dollars, or roubles, or francs, or what not. Well, remember that we all have to take a journey into a land beyond the grave, where our money, and our pride, and our intellect, and our strength, and our success will not avail us—these will not be the currency of the country. Let us change our currency now, and get such property as faith, love, purity, gentleness, meekness, truth—these alone will pass current in the better country. Consecrate your wealth, or your work, or your influence, or whatever you have to God. (*H. J. Wilmot Buxton, M.A.*)

Making friends of mammon.—Probably most of us understand that we are to do what good we can with our "goods" now, in order that when we die we may receive the reward of our good deeds. But that is a very partial and imperfect reading of the words. It is true that our Lord promises us an eternal reward: but "eternity" is a word that covers the present and the past as well as the future. It is true He promises that, if we make friends of mammon, then, when mammon fails us, our "friends will receive us"; and it is also true that mammon will fail us when we die, for it is very certain that we cannot carry it out of the world with us, even in the portable form of a cheque-book. But may not mammon fail us before we die? May we not, even while we are in this life, lose our money, or find that there are other losses for which no money can compensate us? We know very well that we may, some of us know it only too sadly. Riches have wings for use, and not only for show. It is not only the grim face of Death that scares them to flight; they flee before a thousand other alarms. The changes and accidents in which they fail us are innumerable; there are countless wounds which gold will not heal, endless cravings which it will not satisfy. And the very point and gist and value of our Lord's promise is that, whenever mammon fails us, in life and its changes and sorrows no less than in death, if we have previously made friends out of it, these friends will open eternal tabernacles in which our stricken spirits may find refuge and consolation. It is this present, this constant, this eternal reward of a wise use of our temporal possessions on which we need most of all to fix our thoughts. And, remember, we all need it, the poor no less than the rich. For we all have some acquaintance with mammon, though for some of us, happily, it is a very distant acquaintance. We all have a little money, or money's worth, at our control, and may take one of two courses. Well, now, suppose a man has lived long enough to feel his feet and to consider the courses that are open to him, and to be sincerely anxious to take the right course and to make the best use he can of his life. All around him he sees neighbours who are pushing on with the utmost eagerness in the pursuit of fortune, who are sacrificing ease, culture, pleasure, health, and at times conscience itself, in their love for that which St. Paul pronounces to be a root of all evil, a temptation and a snare, and which Christ says makes it very hard for a man to enter the kingdom of God. He has to determine whether or not he will join in this headlong pursuit—whether he, too, will risk health of body, culture of mind, and sensitive purity of conscience, in the endeavour to grow rich, or richer than he is. He sees that the dignity and comfort and peace of human life depend largely on his being able to supply a large circle of wants, without constant anxiety and care; but he also feels that he has many wants, and these the deepest, which mere wealth will not supply. Accordingly, he resolves to work diligently and as wisely as he can, in order to secure an adequate provision for his physical necessities, and to guard his independence; but he resolves also that he will not sacrifice himself, or all that is best and purest

and most refined in himself, to the pursuit of money and what it will fetch. Hence, so far as he can, he limits his wants; he keeps his tastes simple and pure; and by labours that do not absorb his whole time and energies he provides for the due gratification of these tastes and wants. Hence also he gives a good deal of his time and energy to reading good books, let us say, or to mastering some natural science, or to developing a taste for music and acquiring skill in it. He expects his neighbour, who had no better start nor opportunities than he, to grow far richer than he himself has done, if his neighbour think only of getting and investing money. And therefore he does not grudge him his greater wealth, nor look on it with an envious eye; he rather rejoices that he himself has given up some wealth in order to acquire a higher culture, and to develop his literary or artistic tastes. Here, then, we have two men, two neighbours, before us. The one has grown very rich, has far more money than he can enjoy, more even perhaps than he quite knows how to spend or invest, but he has hardly anything except what his money will procure for him. The other has only a modest provision for his wants, but he has a mind stored with the best thoughts of ancient and modern wisdom, an eye which finds a thousand miracles of beauty in every scene of Nature, and an ear that trembles under the ecstasy of sweet harmonious sounds. By some sudden turn of fortune, mammon fails them both; they are both reduced to poverty: both, so soon as they recover from the shock, have to make a fresh start in life. Which of the two is better off now? Which of them has made real friends to himself out of the mammon while he had it? Not the wealthier of the two assuredly; for, now that he has lost his wealth, he has lost all that he had: he has lived only to get rich; when his riches went, all went. But the other man, the man who read and thought and cultivated his mental faculties, he has not lost all. His money has gone, but it has not taken from him the wise thoughts he had gathered from books, or his insight into the secrets and beauties of Nature, or the power to charm from the concord of sweet sounds. He is simply thrown more absolutely on these inward and inseparable possessions for occupation and enjoyment. While he had it he made friends to himself out of the mammon of unrighteousness; and, now that it has failed him, those friends receive him into tabernacles which are always open, and in which he has long learned to find pleasure and to take rest. Poor and imperfect as this illustration is, for there are losses in which even Science and Art, even Nature and Culture, can give us but cold comfort—it may nevertheless suffice to make our Lord's words clear. For, obviously, if a man give a good part of the time he might devote to the acquisition of wealth to religious culture, instead of to merely mental culture; if he take thought and spend time in acquiring habits of prayer and worship and obedience and trust, in acquainting himself with the will of God and doing it; if he expend money, and time which is worth money to him, in helping on the works of the Church and in ministering to the wants of the sorrowful and guilty—he, too, has made to himself friends out of the mammon of unrighteousness, and friends that will not fail him when mammon fails him, but will receive him into tabernacles of rest. However poor he may be, he can still pray, and read his Bible, and put his trust in God, and urge the guilty to penitence, and speak comfort to the sorrowful; and, by his cheerful content and unswerving confidence in the Divine goodness, he may now bear witness, with an eloquence far beyond that of mere words, to the reality and grandeur of a truly religious life. Faith, hope, charity, righteousness and godliness, patience and meekness, will not close their doors against him, because mammon has slammed his door in his face. These are eternal friends, who pitch their tabernacles beside us wherever our path may lead, and who welcome us to the rest and shelter they afford all the more heartily because we have not where to lay our head. (*S. Cox.*)

The earthly life a heavenly training:—It has been observed by an eminent critic, that the words, "mammon of unrighteousness" might be better rendered, "mammon of deceitfulness"; for Christ never condemned the possession of wealth as in itself an unrighteous thing. It is very often the righteous reward of praiseworthy toil. But He speaks of it as deceitful, because he who trusts to it will find that its promises are lies, and will fail at last, leaving him miserably alone; and with this failure Christ contrasts the certainty of eternal possessions. We can enter now into the meaning of the parable. If the riches of life—which are only one and a comparatively insignificant circumstance in man's earthly history—may prepare him for eternity, then it follows that every circumstance of life—our wealth or our poverty, our work or our rest—may form a training. Here, then, seems to be the thought which Christ has shadowed forth in this earthly form—Every circumstance

of man's life may become a training for immortality. It is obvious that if this be true it is of supreme importance. But how is it possible for all our life to become a training for immortality? or, to use the words of Christ, how may we so make friends of our earthly circumstances, that when they have passed, we may have been prepared by their employment for the everlasting habitations? The tenth and eleventh verses of this chapter imply two great principles on which this possibility is founded—the eternity of God's law, and the perpetuity of man's character. On the one hand, it is possible to make every circumstance of life part of one grand training, because the law of the immortal life is the law of a blessed life here. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." These words imply that the law of God which guides us here extends over all worlds. The life of time is ruled by no different law from that which prevails in the great life of eternity. The faithfulness which makes men blessed here, is the same law of life which creates their blessedness there. This is obviously the first great principle that renders it possible for us to make our present circumstances an education for the everlasting world. If the law which prevails there were essentially different from that which prevails here, then no present conduct, no employment of the earthly, could prepare for the heavenly; we should have to learn a new rule of life, and every present circumstance would be vain as affording a preparation for the life to come. This is all we need know of the future, as far as regards our present conduct. This thought may perhaps be made clear to every one by taking an illustration with which we are all familiar. We know that in different countries different customs are adopted and different laws prevail. Actions, which in this land would be thought natural, would be considered absurd in another. Deeds, which in one land are common, might elsewhere be regarded as crimes. The man who would travel into other countries must first of all acquaint himself with their social customs, and study the requirements of their laws. He thus prepares himself to enter other lands without danger, and live another life without difficulty. Now we have a journey to make at no distant period into another world. We stand looking at its dim outlines, seeing friend after friend depart, waving us their sad, solemn farewells, and knowing that we must soon set out for that distant region. But the law, whose fulfilment is love, pervades every world of the blessed. The love of God, which forms the Christian blessedness in this low earth, is the source of the highest angels' bliss in the great eternity. Therefore we have no new law of life to learn. The other fact requisite to show this is the perpetuity of human character. See verse 11: "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" In their deepest meaning these words involve this principle—"Unfaithful in time, unfaithful in eternity." Some illustration of this perpetuity of human character is afforded us by the difficulty of changing men's characters in this world. How, for instance, can you change the character of a hard, selfish, worldly man? You cannot do it by reasoning. We know not what state may await us after death, but as far as we can gather from the teachings of the Bible, death immortalizes character. All life's affections, and fellowships, and friendships—all the revelations we have of human nobleness and grandeur—if they teach us more of God by revealing the Godlike, become a discipline for eternity. Every glory in nature—the pomp of autumn, the rejoicing beauty of the spring, the splendour of the sunset, or the majesty of the starry hosts—everything, in fact, in the outer world which raises our thoughts to the Divine, becomes a training for the immortal. Every dark temptation that makes us strong in resistive might; every gloomy doubt that by its conquest helps to strengthen our faith, every sorrow that drives us to repose more utterly on the eternal love, becomes a schooling for the higher world, where the presence of the Father is boundless joy. In conclusion, let us observe the practical application of the words of our text. They are a call to action. The duty to which Christ here summons us is to watch the formation of character. They contain also a lesson of encouragement. (*E. L. Hull, B.A.*) *The Christian's farewell to business*:—I. A FAREWELL IMPORTS A LOOK BEHIND. What is there in the Christian's last look at the world? It is a fact that that look must be taken. We may avoid many things, but not that. Of the end of business we can have no doubt. If it end not before death, it will at death. When the end comes, there will be a tenderness in the adieu. Of course, there will be much to make a farewell pleasant. Business will be an object of not unmingled regret. 1. But still, we say, there must be tenderness in the adieu. It is an adieu.

2. But there are other sources of regret. Business has been a source of positive enjoyment. It has supplied a wholesome excitement. It has exercised the active powers. 3. Nor can we omit to remark that when the Christian fails in death, he leaves, in business, that which has been the channel and scene of spiritual things. It is in business he has "exercised himself to godliness." The place of work has been the place of prayer. II. Let us now contemplate the Christian in THAT BRIGHT PROSPECT WHICH IS BEFORE HIM WHEN HE LEAVES THE WORLD, as he looks forward to "the everlasting habitations" to which he will be "received" at his failure in death. That ground is Christ. It is not because we are by good works entitled to it, that we can obtain an inheritance above. 1. And, therefore, I remark, first, that though secular life closes at death, the Christian retains all that made that life holy and noble. With many, business was an end; with him, it was a means. With many, the thought, the care, the aim, the ambition, were all comprised in this outward world; with him the outward world was but a glass, a tool, a stepping-stone. 2. And while the Christian retains his principles, which made his business good and holy and happy, those principles are transferred to a better sphere at death. 3. The Christian, in failing at death, will be able not only to expect the continuance of holy activity in a better sphere, but to connect his past with his future activity. (J. A. Morris.)

Wealth changed into the coin of heaven:—Every rich man who is growing selfish and using all his money for earthly uses only should study this parable. It would surely cure him. Money may be made a grand thing both now and hereafter; for by liberality you can change it into the current coin of heaven. You are like an orphan maid I read of, whose kind master allowed her to give away the fruit of his garden, that she might raise up friends for herself among the neighbours. Wealth thus used is worthy of its name, which is just *weal* writ large. (J. Wells.) *Mammon:*—Mammon, the world—ah, is it not adverse to the interests of our souls? What then? Believer, adversary though it be, you may make it your friend. A skilful seaman, when once fairly out to sea, can make a wind from the west carry him westward! he can make the wind that blows right in his face bear him onward to the very point from which it blows. When he arrives at home, he is able to say, the wind from the west impelled me westward, and led me into my desired haven. Thus if we were skilful, and watchful, and earnest, we might make the unrighteous mammon our friend; we might so turn our side to each of its tortuous impulses, that, willing or unwilling, conscious or unconscious, it should from day to day drive us nearer home. (W. Arnot.)

The everlasting dwellings:—I. WHAT KIND OF DWELLINGS ARE THESE? 1. The sweetest peace reigns in them, as regards the body. (1) There is no earthly burden. (2) There are no afflictions or tribulations. 2. The sweetest peace, as regards the soul. (1) There is no struggle. (2) There is no peril. 3. The greatest joy reigns in them. II. FOR WHOM ARE THE EVERLASTING DWELLINGS? 1. Not for sinners (Rev. xxi. 27). (1) The unjust. (2) The uncharitable. (3) The unbelieving. (4) Drunkards. (5) The unchaste. (6) The slothful. (7) Blasphemers. 2. Only for the just. To heaven we are led—(1) By unwavering faith. (2) By childlike humility. (3) By a strenuous combat. (4) By true justice. (Joseph Schuen.)

How the little may be used to get the great:—I. First, then, I desire to consider briefly that strange, new standard of value which is set up here. On the one side is placed the whole glittering heap of all material good that man can touch or handle, all that wealth can buy of this perishable world; and on the other hand there are the modest and unseen riches of pure thoughts and high desires, of a noble heart, of a life assimilated to Jesus Christ. The two are compared in three points—as to their intrinsic magnitude, as to their quality, as to our ownership of them. Of the great glittering heap our Lord says: "It is nothing, at its greatest it is small"; and of the other our Lord says: "At its smallest it is great." All the wealth of all the Rothschilds is too little to fill the soul of the poorest beggar that stands by their carriage door with hungry eyes. The least degree of truth, of love, of goodness, is bigger in its power to fill the heart than all the externals that human avarice can gather about it. Can we thus enter into the understanding of Christ's scale and standard, and think of all the external as "that which is least," and of all the inward as "that which is much"? The world looks at worldly wealth through a microscope which magnifies the infinitesimally small, and then it looks at "the land that is very far off" through a telescope turned the wrong way, which diminishes all that is great. But if we can get up by the side of Jesus Christ and see things with His eyes and from His station, it will be as when a man climbs

a mountain, and the little black line, as it seemed to him when looked at from the plain, has risen up into a giant cliff; and all the big things down below, as they seemed when he was among them, have dwindled. That white speck is a palace; that bit of a green patch there, over which the skylark flies in a minute, is a great lord's estate. Oh, dear brethren, we do not need to wait to get to heaven to learn heaven's tables of weights and measures! One grain of true love to God is greater in its power to enrich than a California of gold. Take, again, the second antithesis, the "unrighteous mammon" and "the true riches." That word, "unrighteous" in its application to material good, is somewhat difficult. If we keep strictly to the antithesis "unrighteous" must be the opposite of "true." The word would then come to mean very nearly the same as "deceitful"—that which betrays. And so we have presented to us the old familiar thought that external good of all sorts looks to be a great deal better than it is. It promises a great many things that it never fulfils, tempting us as a fish is tempted to the hook by a bait which hides the hook. But the inward riches of faith, true holiness, lofty aspirations, Christ-directed purposes, all these are true. They promise no more than they perform. They bring more than they said they would. No man ever said, "I have tasted Thy love, and lo! it does not satisfy me! I have realized Thy help, and lo! it has not been enough!" And then the last contrast is between "another's" and "your own." Another's? Well, that may mean God's; and therefore you are stewards, as the whole parable that precedes the text has been teaching. But I am not sure that that is the only, nor indeed the principal reference of the word here. And I think when our Lord speaks of all outward possessions as being, even whilst mine, another's, He means to point there, not only to the fact of stewardship, but also to the fact of the limitations and defects of all outward possessions of outward good. That is to say, there is no real contact between the outward things that a man has and himself. The only things that you really have, paradox as it sounds, are the things that you are. All the rest you hold by a very slight tie, like the pearls that are sewn upon some half-barbarous Eastern magnate's jacket, which he shakes off as he walks. So men say, "This is mine!" and it only means "It is not yours." There is no real possession, even while there is an apparent one, and just because there is no real contact, because there is always a gap between the man and his goods, because he has not, as it were, gathered them into himself, therefore the possession is transient as well as incomplete. It slips away from the hand even whilst you hold it. And just as we may say, "There is no present, but everything is past or future, and what we call the present is only the meeting point of these two times," so we may say, there is no possession, because everything is either coming into my hands or going out of them, and my apparent ownership is only for a moment. I simply transmit.

"'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands."

And so it passes. And then consider the common accidents of life which rob men of their goods, and the waste by the very act of use, which gnaws them away as the sea does the cliffs; and, last of all, death's separation. What can be taken out of a man's hands by death has no right to be called his. II. Notice for a moment the other broad principle that is laid down in these three verses, as to THE HIGHEST USE OF THE LOWER GOOD. Whether you are a Christian man or whether you are not, this is true about you, that the way in which you deal with your outward goods, your wealth, your capacity of all sorts, may become a barrier to your possessing the higher, or it may become a mighty help. There are plenty of people, and some of them listening to me now, who are kept from being Christians because they love the world so much. The world thinks that the highest use of the highest things is to gain possession of the lowest thereby, and that truth and genius and poetry are given to select spirits and are wasted unless they make money out of them. Christ's notion of the relationship is exactly the opposite, that all the outward is then lifted to its noblest purpose when it is made rigidly subordinate to the highest; and that the best thing that any man can do with his money is so to spend it as to "purchase for himself a good degree," "laying up for himself in store a good foundation that he may lay hold on eternal life." III. And now let me say one last word as to THE FAITHFULNESS WHICH THUS UTILIZES THE LOWEST AS A MEANS OF POSSESSING MORE FULLY THE HIGHEST. You will be "faithful" if, through all your administrations of your possessions, there runs, first, the principle of stewardship; you will be "faithful" if, through all your administration of your

earthly possessions, there runs, second, the principle of sacrifice; you will be "faithful" if, through all your administration of your earthly possessions, there runs, third, the principle of brotherhood. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Wise expenditure*:—Christ here tells us plainly which is the path of wisdom. When we see a man making ducks and drakes of his money, we call him a fool—and so he is, from our point of view, because he might be acquiring solid advantages with what he is wasting. But, from the point of view of the gospel, we are just as great fools ourselves, for those solid advantages of which we speak are probably as far from being eternal as the others; keeping our eyes fixed upon the everlasting future, we must admit that every penny spent upon ourselves is as much wasted as if we had chucked it into the river. Do not then ask me, "May I allow myself this luxury?" or "May I not indulge this taste?" Of course you may, as long as it is harmless, but you will be wiser if you don't, for you might with the same money be making friends for eternity. This saying of our Lord, then, is, in its fulness, for those that can receive it, and they are, perhaps, as few as they are happy; when we get to heaven and behold the richness of their reward, the overflowing happiness of those who have spent and been spent in making others happy, we shall wonder how we could have been so stupid as to waste our money on ourselves. For the rest of us, it is a principle which we must acknowledge humbly, even if we have not strength of mind to act upon it much at present. We may still decide, perhaps, to live up to our income, to live according to our rank, to maintain a certain style, and so on, but we will not be such contemptible hypocrites as to pretend that this is the path of Christian wisdom. The principle which Christ lays down we shall keep before our eyes, and we shall pray that it may sink little by little into our hearts, until it begin to bear fruit in our lives—the principle, I mean, that every penny spent on self is wasted, every penny we can learn to part with is saved because laid up with Him. (*R. Winterbotham, M.A.*) *Charity the road to wealth*:—You want to double your riches, and without gambling or stock-jobbing. Share it. Whether it be material or intellectual, its rapid increase will amaze you. What would the sun have been, had he folded himself up in darkness? Surely he would have gone out. So would Socrates. This road to wealth seems to have been discovered some three thousand years ago; at least it was known to Hesiod, and has been recommended by him in the one precious line he has left us. But even he complains of the fools who did not know that half is more than the whole. And ever since, though mankind have always been in full chase after riches, though they have not feared to follow Columbus and Gama in chase of it, though they have waded through blood, and crept through falsehood, and trampled on their own hearts, and been ready to ride on a broomstick, in chase of it, very few have ever taken the road, albeit the easiest, the shortest, and the surest. (*J. C. Hare.*)

Vers. 10-13. *Faithful in that which is least.*—*On living to God in small things*:—

1. Notice how little we know concerning the relative importance of events and duties. We use the terms "great" and "small" in speaking of actions, occasions, plans, and duties, only in reference to their mere outward look and first impression. Some of the most latent agents and mean-looking substances in nature are yet the most operative; but yet, when we speak of natural objects, we call them great or small, not according to their operativeness, but according to size, count, report, or show. So it comes to pass when we are classing actions, duties, or occasions, that we call a certain class great and another small, when really the latter are many-fold more important and influential than the former. We are generally ignorant of the real moment of events which we think we understand.
2. It is to be observed that, even as the world judges, small things constitute almost the whole of life.
3. It very much exalts, as well as sanctions this view, that God is so observant of small things. He upholds the sparrow's wing, clothes the lily with His own beautifying hand, and numbers the hairs of His children. He holds the balancings of the clouds. He maketh small the drops of rain.
4. It is a fact of history and of observation that all efficient men, while they have been men of comprehension, have also been men of detail. Napoleon was the most effective man in modern times—some will say, of all times. The secret of his character was, that while his plans were more vast, more various, and, of course, more difficult than those of other men, he had the talent, at the same time, to fill them up with perfect promptness and precision, in every particular of execution. There must be detail in every great work.
5. It is to be observed that there is more real piety in adorning one small than one great occasion. This may seem

paradoxical, but what I intend will be seen by one or two illustrations. I have spoken of the minuteness of God's works. When I regard the eternal God as engaged in polishing an atom, or elaborating the functions of a mote invisible to the eye, what evidence do I there receive of His desire to perfect His works! No gross and mighty world, however plausibly shaped, would yield a hundredth part the intensity of evidence. An illustration from human things will present a closer parallel. It is perfectly well understood, or if not, it should be, that almost any husband would leap into the sea, or rush into the burning edifice to rescue a perishing wife. But to anticipate the convenience or happiness of a wife in some small matter, the neglect of which would be unobserved, is a more eloquent proof of tenderness. 6. The importance of living to God in ordinary and small things, is seen in the fact that character, which is the end of religion, is in its very nature a growth. Application: 1. Private Christians are here instructed in the true method of Christian progress and usefulness. 2. Our subject enables us to offer some useful suggestions, concerning the manner in which Churches may be made to prosper. 3. Finally, some useful hints are suggested to the ministers of Christ. (*H. Bushnell, D.D.*) *The value of little things*:—"Who has despised the day of small things?" Not the sagacious men of the world, to whom experience has taught the necessity of husbanding the minutes that make up days, and the pence that grow to pounds. **I. OUR LIVES FOR THE MOST PART ARE MADE UP OF LITTLE THINGS, AND BY THESE OUR PRINCIPLE IS TO BE TESTED.** There are very few who have to take a prominent place in the great conflicts of their age, and to play their part in the arena of public life. The vast majority must dwell in humbler scenes, and be content to do a much meaner work. The conflicts which a Christian has to maintain, either against the evil in his own soul, or in the narrow circle where alone his influence is felt, appear to be very trivial and unimportant, yet are they to him the battle of life and for life, and true heroism is to be shown here as well as in those grander struggles in which some may win the leader's fame, or even the martyr's crown. It will stimulate us to faithfulness in such little things if we bear in mind the way in which the Master regards the humblest works that are done, and the poorest sacrifices that are made from a pure feeling of love to Him. He can recognize and bless the martyr-spirit even though it be shown in other ways than the endurance of bonds, or the suffering of death. There is not a tear of sympathy with the sorrows of others which we shed that falls without His knowledge. His presence is with us to encourage and strengthen us in these little as in the greater trials, and faithfulness here will have its own reward. **II. LITTLE DEFECTS WEAKEN THE INFLUENCE OF MANY VIRTUES.** "One sinner" (the wise man tells us) "destroyeth much good," and then following out the principle he proceeds to show by an expressive illustration how a little sin or even folly in a good man may rob him of much of the power that otherwise he would possess for good. "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour, so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour." The world is always on the watch for the faults of Christians. But the point on which we wish chiefly to insist is that men's estimate of our character is regulated chiefly by their observation of little things. **III. LITTLE THINGS CONTRIBUTE MATERIALLY TO THE FORMATION OF CHARACTER.** Under the operation of varied causes, of whose power over us we are hardly conscious, we are continually growing in holiness or sinking lower and lower in sin, by a process so gradual as to be scarcely perceptible. Conversion may be sudden, but not sanctification. Our power of resistance is to grow by constant exercise; our love, fed by the ministry of Providence and grace, is to burn with an ever brighter and purer flame; our path is to be like the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Thus, by listening to every voice of instruction, by using every opportunity, by watchfulness in the least things, are we to attain spiritual increase. There is a part of our Lancashire coast on which the sea is making steady encroachments. Those who have long been familiar with its scenery can point you to places over which the tide now rolls its waters, where a few short years ago they wandered along the grassy cliff, and stood to watch the play of the wild waves beneath. From year to year the observer may note continued alteration—fresh portions of the cliff swept away, and the bed of the ocean becoming ever wider. Were he to ask for an account of these changes, some would tell him that during a terrible tempest the sea had rolled in with more than its usual violence and carried away great fragments of solid earth—and fancy that thus they had told the whole story. His own eyes, however, gave him fuller information. He sees around him preparations for the desolations of the coming winter.

Other places are now menaced with the fate of their predecessors, and the work is already being done—the process may be gradual, but sure—every tide of more than ordinary power is contributing something towards it—“by little and little” the work advances, and all is making ready for the fiercer storm which shall put the final stroke to what may seem to be the work of a night, but is in reality that of weeks and months. This is a picture but too true of incidents in the spiritual life of man. Sometimes the successive steps of the process are all hidden, and we see only the sad result; in others its advances may be more distinctly marked. (*J. G. Guinness, B.A.*)

Gradual attainment of holiness:—Holiness of character is not a thing into which we can jump in a moment, and just when we please. It is not like a mushroom, the growth of an hour. It cannot be attained without great watchfulness, earnest effort, much prayer, and a very close walk with Jesus. Like the coral reef which grows by little daily additions until it is strong enough to resist the mighty waves of the ocean, so is a holy character made up of what may be called littles, though in truth each of those littles is of vast importance. Little duties prayerfully discharged; little temptations earnestly resisted in the strength which God supplies out of the fulness which He has made to dwell in Jesus Christ for His people; little sins avoided, or crucified; these all together help to form that holy character which, in the hour of need, will be, under God, such a sure defence to the Christian. (*A. C. Price, B.A.*)

Fidelity in little things:—In every thought, word, and act of an intelligent agent, there is a moral principle involved. 1. Fidelity in little things commends itself to us, when we consider our inability to estimate the prospective value, power, and influence of the smallest things. 2. Fidelity in little things commends itself when we consider that it is only by attention to small things that we can hope to be faithful in great. Great events often turn on little hinges. Chemists say, one grain of iodine will impart its colour to seven thousand times its weight in water. So, often, a little deed containing a great moral principle will impart its nature to many hearts and lives. 3. Attention to small things is important, as it relates to our individual character. Its effect is subjective as well as objective. A beautiful character reaches its climax by progressive development. You cannot paint it on the life. It must be inwrought. 4. The example given us by Christ, our great prototype, should prompt us to fidelity in little things. 5. We should exercise the strictest fidelity in all things, small and great, because we are to be judged in view of these things. (*J. W. Bledsoe.*)

On religious principle:—Consider the excellence of religious principle—1. In the energy of its operation. (1) Promptness in decision. (2) Determination to do one's duty. (3) Courage. (4) Self-denial. 2. In the uniformity of its effects. 3. In the extent of its influence. It prompts to the discharge of every duty, and to the avoidance of every sin. 4. The simplicity of its character. 5. The perpetuity of its existence. Undecaying and immortal. (*Essex Remembrancer.*)

Faithful in little, faithful in much:—Now let us look, for a moment or two, at these three principles. I. From the highest point of view, TRUE FAITHFULNESS KNOWS NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN GREAT AND SMALL DUTIES. From the highest point of view—that is, from God's point of view—to Him, nothing is great, nothing small, as we measure it. The worth and the quality of an action depends on its motive only, and not at all on its prominence, or on any other of the accidents which we are always apt to adopt as the tests of the greatness of our deeds. The largeness of the consequences of anything that we do is no measure of the true greatness or true value of it. So it is in regard to God Himself, and His doings. What can be little to the making of which there goes the force of a soul that can know God, and must abide for evermore? Nothing is small that a spirit can do. Nothing is small that can be done from a mighty motive. Faithfulness measures acts as God measures them. “Large” or “small” are not words for the vocabulary of conscience. It knows only two words—right and wrong. The circle that is in a gnat's eye is as true a circle as the one that holds within its sweep all the stars; and the sphere that a dew-drop makes is as perfect a sphere as that of the world. All duties are the same which are done from the same motive; all acts which are not so done are alike sins. Faithfulness is one in every region. Large or small is of no account to the Sovereign eye. “He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward,” because though not gifted with the prophet's tongue, he has the prophet's spirit, and does his small act of hospitality from the very same prophet-impulse which in another, who is more loftily endowed, leads to burning words and mighty deeds. Faithfulness is faithfulness, on whatsoever scale it be set forth! II. Then—in another point of view,

FAITHFULNESS IN SMALL DUTIES IS EVEN GREATER THAN FAITHFULNESS IN GREAT. Great things that are great because they seem to have very wide-reaching consequences, and seem to be lifted up upon a pinnacle of splendour; or great things that are great because there was severe resistance that had to be overcome before we did them, and sore temptations that were dragging us down on our way to the performance of them—are really great and lofty. Only, the little duties that had no mighty consequences, no glittering splendour about them, and the little duties that had not much strife with temptation before they were done, may be as great, as great in God's eye, as great perhaps in their consequences, as great in their rewards, as in the other. Ah, my brother, it is a far harder thing, and it is a far higher proof of a thorough-going persistent Christian principle woven into the very texture of my soul, to go on plodding and patient, never taken by surprise by any small temptation, than to gather into myself the strength which God has given me, and, expecting some great storm to come down upon me, to stand fast and let it rage. It is a great deal easier to die once for Christ than to live always for Him. It is a great deal easier to do some single mighty act of self-surrender, than daily—unnoticed, patiently—to “crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts.” Let us neither repine at our narrow spheres, nor fancy that we can afford to live carelessly in them because they are narrow. The smallest duties are often harder—because of their apparent insignificance, because of their constant recurrence—harder than the great ones. But do not let us forget that if harder, they are on the whole more needful. The world has more need of a great number of Christian people doing little things like Christians, than it has need of one apostle preaching like an apostle, or one martyr dying like a martyr. The mass of trifles makes magnitude. The little things are greater than the great, because of their number. They are more efficacious than the single lofty acts. Like the air which in the lungs needs to be broken up into small particles, and diffused ere it parts with its vitalizing principle to the blood, so the minute acts of obedience, and the exhibition of the power of the gospel in the thousand trifles of Christian lives, permeating everywhere, will vitalize the world and will preach the gospel in such a fashion as never can be done by any single and occasional, though it may seem to be more lofty and more worthy, agency. Honour the trifles, and you will find yourself right about the great things! Lastly: FAITHFULNESS IN THAT WHICH IS LEAST IS THE PREPARATION FOR, AND SECURES OUR HAVING A WIDER SPHERE IN WHICH TO OBEY GOD. Of course, it is quite easy to see how, if once we are doing, what I have already said is the harder task—habitually doing the little things wisely and well, for the love of Christ and in the fear of God—we shall be fitted for the sorest sudden temptations, and shall be made able to perform far larger and far more apparently splendid acts. Every power strengthens by exercise. Every act of obedience smoothes the road for all that shall come after. And, on the other side, the same process exactly goes on to make men, by slow degrees, unfaithful in all. Tampering with a trifle; saying, Oh, it is a small matter, and I can venture it; or, It is a little thing, too little for mighty motives to be brought to bear upon it—that ends in this—“unjust also in much.” My brother, life is all great. Life is great because it is the aggregation of littles. As the chalk cliffs in the South, that rear themselves hundreds of feet above the crawling sea beneath, are all made up of the minute skeletons of microscopic animalculæ; so life, mighty and awful as having eternal consequences, life that towers beetling over the sea of eternity, is made up of these minute incidents, of these trifling duties, of these small tasks; and if thou art not “faithful in that which is least,” thou art unfaithful in the whole. He only is faithful that is full of faith. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *Guilt not to be estimated by gain*:—I. The great principle of the text is, that he who has sinned, though to a small amount in respect of the fruit of his transgression—provided he has done so by passing over a forbidden limit which was distinctly known to him, has, in the act of doing so, incurred a full condemnation in respect of the principle of his transgression. In one word, that the gain of it may be small, while the guilt of it may be great; that the latter ought not to be measured by the former; but that he who is unfaithful in the least shall be dealt with, in respect of the offence he has given to God, in the same way as if he had been unfaithful in much. II. The first reason which we would assign in vindication of this is, that, by a small act of injustice, the line which separates the right from the wrong is just as effectually broken over as by a great act of injustice. There is no shading off at the margin of guilt, but a clear and vigorous delineation. It is not by a gentle transition that a man steps over from honesty to dishonesty. There is

between them a wall rising up unto heaven; and the high authority of heaven must be stormed ere one inch of entrance can be made into the region of iniquity. The morality of the Saviour never leads him to gloss over beginnings of crime. 2. The second reason why he who is unfaithful in the least has incurred the condemnation of him who is unfaithful in much, is, that the littleness of the gain, so far from giving a littleness to the guilt, is in fact a circumstance of aggravation. There is just this difference. He who has committed injustice for the sake of a less advantage has done it on the impulse of a less temptation. Nay, by the second reason, this may serve to aggravate the wrath of the Divinity against him. It proves how small the price is which he sets upon his eternity, and how cheaply he can bargain the favour of God away from him, and how low he rates the good of an inheritance with Him, and for what a trifle he can dispose of all interest in His kingdom and in His promises. It is at the precise limit between the right and the wrong that the flaming sword of God's law is placed. It is there that "Thus saith the Lord" presents itself, in legible characters, to our view. It is there where the operation of His commandment begins; and not at any of those higher gradations where a man's dishonesty first appals himself by the chance of its detection, or appals others by the mischief and insecurity which it brings upon social life. II. Let us now attempt to UNFOLD A FEW OF THE PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES THAT MAY BE DRAWN FROM THE PRINCIPLE OF THE TEXT, both in respect to our general relation with God, and in respect to the particular lesson of faithfulness which may be deduced from it. 1. There cannot be a stronger possible illustration of our argument than the very first act of retribution that occurred in the history of our species. What is it that invests the eating of a solitary apple with a grandeur so momentous? How came an action, in itself so minute, to be the germ of such mighty consequences? We may not be able to answer all these questions; but we may at least learn what a thing of danger it is, under the government of a holy and inflexible God, to tamper with the limits of obedience. 2. Let us, therefore, urge the spirit and the practice of this lesson upon your observation. It is evangelizing human life by impregnating its minutest transactions with the spirit of the gospel. It is strengthening the wall of partition between sin and obedience. It is the teacher of righteousness taking his stand at the outpost of that territory which he is appointed to defend, and warning his hearers of the danger that lies in a single footstep of encroachment. It is letting them know that it is in the act of stepping over the limit that the sinner throws the gauntlet of his defiance against the authority of God. It may appear a very little thing, when you are told to be honest in little matters; when the servant is told to keep her hand from every one article about which there is not an express or understood allowance on the part of her superiors; when the dealer is told to lop off the excesses of that minuter fraudulency which is so currently practised in the humble walks of merchandise; when the workman is told to abstain from those petty reservations of the material of his work for which he is said to have such snug and ample opportunity; and when, without pronouncing on the actual extent of these transgressions, all are told to be faithful in that which is least, else, if there be truth in our text, they incur the guilt of being unfaithful in much. It may be thought, that because such dishonesties as these are scarcely noticeable, they are therefore not worthy of notice. But it is just in the proportion of their being unnoticeable by the human eye, that it is religious to refrain from them. These are the cases in which it will be seen, whether the control of the omniscience of God makes up for the control of human observation—in which the sentiment, that "Thou God seest me!" should carry a preponderance through all the secret places of a man's history—in which, when every earthly check of an earthly morality is withdrawn, it should be felt that the eye of God is upon him, and that the judgment of God is in reserve for him. (T. Chalmers, D.D.) *Faithfulness in little things*:—In our text the Master declares that fidelity, which is an element of conscience, must be thorough. It must not be an optional thing, chosen when we see that it will be better than any other instrument to secure a desired end. It must belong to every part of life, pervading it. It must belong to the least things as much as to the highest. It is not a declaration that little things are as important as great things. It is not a declaration that the conscience is to regard all duties as of one magnitude and of one importance. It is a declaration that the habit of violating conscience, even in the least things, produces mischief that at last invalidate it for the greatest, and that is a truth that scarcely can have contradiction. I propose to illustrate this truth in some of its relations to life. In the first place, I shall speak of the

heedlessness and unconscientiousness with which men take up opinions and form judgments, on every side and of every kind, in daily life. In regard to events, men seldom make it a matter of conscience to see things as they are, and hear things as they really report themselves. They follow their curiosity, their sense of wonder, their temper, their interests, or their prejudices, instead of their judgment and their conscience. There are few men who make it a point to know just what things do happen of which they are called to speak, and just how they happen. How many men were there round the corner? "Twenty," says the man, quickly. There were seven. How long did you have to wait? "Two hours, at least." It was just three-quarters of an hour by the watch. So, in a thousand things that happen every day, one man repeats what his imagination reported to him, and another man what his impatient, irritable feelings said to him. There are very few men that make it a matter of deliberate conscience to see things as they are, and report them as they happen. This becomes a great hindrance to business, clogs it, keeps men under the necessity of revising their false impressions; expends time and work; puts men on false tracks and in wrong directions; multiplies the burdens of life. But its worse effect is seen in the judgments and prejudices which men are liable to entertain about their fellow-men, and the false sentences which they are accustomed to issue, either by word of mouth or by thoughts and feelings. In thousands of men, the mind, if unveiled, would be found to be a Star-chamber filled with false witnesses and cruel judgments. The effect in each case may be small, but if you consider the sum-totals of a man's life, and the grand amount of the endless scenes of false impressions, of wicked judgments, of causeless prejudices, they will be found to be enormous. This, however, is the least evil. It is the entire untrustworthiness of a moral sense which has been so dealt with that is most to be deplored. The conscience ought to be like a perfect mirror. It ought to reflect exactly the image that falls upon it. A man's judgment that is kept clear by commerce with conscience ought to reveal things as they are, facts as they exist, and conduct as it occurs. Now it is not necessary to break a mirror to pieces in order to make it worthless. Let one go behind it with a pencil, or with a needle of the finest point, and, with delicate touch, make the smallest line through the silver coating of the back; the next day let him make another line at right angles to that; and the third day let him make still another line parallel to the first one; and the next day let him make another line parallel to the second, and so continue to do day by day, and one year shall not have passed away before that mirror will be so scratched that it will be good for nothing. It is not necessary to deal it a hard blow to destroy its power; these delicate touches will do it, little by little. It is not necessary to be a murderer or a burglar in order to destroy the moral sense; but ah! these million little infelicities, as they are called, these scratchings and raspings, take the silver off from the back of the conscience—take the tone and temper out of the moral sense. Nay, we do not need even such mechanical force as this; just let the apartment be uncleansed in which the mirror stands: let particles of dust, and the little flocculent parts of smoke, settle film by film, flake by flake, speck by speck, upon the surface of the mirror, and its function is destroyed, so that it will reflect neither the image of yourself nor of anything else. Its function is as much destroyed as if it were dashed to pieces. Not even is this needed; only let one come so near to it that his warm breath falling on its cold face is condensed to vapour, and then it can make no report. Now there are comparatively few men who destroy their moral sense by a dash and a blow, but there is many a man whose conscience is seared as with a hot iron. The effect of this is not merely to teach us the moral lesson that man is fallible; it is to diminish the trust of man in man. And what is the effect of diminishing that? It is to introduce an element which dissevers society, which drives men away from one another, and takes away our strength. Faith in man, trust in man, is the great law of cohesion in human society. And so this infidelity in little things and little duties works both inwardly as well as outwardly. It deteriorates the moral sense; it makes men unreliable; it makes man stand in doubt of man; it loosens the ties that bind society together, and make it strong; it is the very counteracting agent of that divine love which was meant to bring men together in power. The same truth, yet more apparently, and with more melancholy results, is seen in the untrustworthiness and infidelity of men in matters of honesty and dishonesty. The man that steals one penny is—just as great a transgressor as if he stole a thousand dollars? No, not that. The man that steals one single penny is—as great a transgressor against the laws of society as if he stole a thousand dollars? No, not

exactly that. The man that steals one penny is—just as great a transgressor against the commercial interests of men as if he stole a thousand dollars? No, not that. The man that steals a penny is just as great a transgressor against the purity of his own conscience as if he stole a million of dollars. The danger of these little things is veiled under a false impression. You will hear a man say of his boy, "Though he may tell a little lie, he would not tell a big one; though he may practise a little deceit, he would not practise a big one; though he may commit a little dishonesty, he would not commit a big one." But these little things are the ones that destroy the honour, and the moral sense, and throw down the fence, and let a whole herd of buffaloes of temptation drive right through you. Criminals that die on the gallows; miserable creatures that end their days in poorhouses; wretched beings that hide themselves in loathsome places in cities; men that are driven as exiles across the sea and over the world—these are the ends of little things, the beginnings of which were thought to be safe. It is these little things that constitute your peculiar temptation and your worst danger. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Little things tests of character*:—Can you discover a man's character more accurately by his public, extraordinary acts, than by his ordinary, everyday conduct and spirit? Which is the true Marlborough—the general in the field winning brilliant victories, or the speculator in his chamber manipulating papers for defrauding the public treasury? Which is the real man—Lord Bacon on the bench, or Lord Bacon with open palm behind his back feeling for bribes? Which is the true woman—the lady in the parlour courteously receiving her guests, or the termagant rendering home wretched by everyday exactions and scoldings? Jesus teaches that the little things of everyday life reveal true character, and show the man as he is in himself, by referring to the ordinary tempers by which he is governed. Is it not plain, when simply announced, that general conduct in little things is a truer test of a man's real character than occasional isolated acts could be? 1. Little things make up the vast universe. The clouds gather up the rains in moisture, and part with them in drops. The stars do not leap fitfully along their orbits, but measure with equal movement each consecutive mile. All the analogies of nature point to the minute as essential to the harmony, glory, and utility of the whole. And little things are as necessary in their places in the moral, as in the physical world. 2. Jehovah is observant of little things. Sparrows. Lilies. Jehovah neglects nothing. Nothing is so little as to be beneath His notice. His providence regards with equal distinctness a worm and a world, a unit and a universe. You are unlike your God and Saviour if you neglect little things. 3. Little things engross the most of life. Great events are only occasional. Frequency and regularity would take away from their greatness, by rendering them common. We shall find little to do, if we save our energies for great occasions. If we preserve our piety for prominent services, we shall seldom find place for its exercise. Piety is not something for show, but something for use; not the gay steed in the curricle, but the plough-horse in the furrow; not jewellery for adornment, but calico for home wear and apron for the kitchen. 4. Attention to little things is essential to efficiency and success in accomplishing great things. Letters are little things, but he who scouts the alphabet will never read David's psalms. The mechanic must know how to sharpen his plane, if he would make a moulding; the artist must mix colours, if he would paint landscapes. In every direction the great is reached through the little. He will never rise to great services who will not pass through the little, and train his spiritual nature, and educate his spiritual capabilities. Through faithfulness in the least he rises to faithfulness in the much, and not otherwise. 5. Little things are causes of great events, springs of large influences. To know whether a thing is really small or great, you must trace its results. Xerxes led millions to the borders of Greece. It looked to the world like a big thing. The whole vast array accomplished nothing. It turned out a very small business. The turning of a tiny needle steadily toward a fixed point is a little common thing, but it guides navies along safe and sure paths, over unmarked oceans. So a magnetic word has guided a soul through a stormy world to a peaceful haven. A simple, secret prayer has pierced and opened clouds to pour down showers of spiritual blessings upon a city or state. 6. Conscientiousness in little things is the best evidence of sincere piety. 7. Faithfulness in little things is essential to true piety. The principle of obedience is simply doing what the Lord requires because He requires it. There is nothing little if God requires it. The veriest trifle becomes a great thing if the alternative of obedience or rebellion is involved in it. Microscopic holiness is the perfection of excellence. To live by the day, and to watch each step, is the true pilgrimage method. (*J. L.*)

Burrows, D.D.) Trial of fidelity :—Here are two great truths suggested to us. 1. That we are here in this world merely on trial, and serving our apprenticeship. 2. That it is our fidelity that is tried, not so much whether we have done great or little things, but whether we have shown the spirit which above all else a steward should show—fidelity to the interests entrusted to him. The two verses following, in which this is applied, may best be illustrated by familiar figures. "If," says our Lord, "ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust that which is real?" He considers us all in this world as children busy with mere playthings and toys, though so profoundly in earnest. But, looking at children so engaged, you can perfectly see the character of each. Although the actual things they are doing are of no moment or reality; although, with a frankness and penetration not given to their elders, they know they are but playing, yet each is exhibiting the very qualities which will afterwards make or mar him, the selfish greed and fraud of one child being as patent as the guileless open-handedness of the other. To the watchful parents these games that are forgotten in the night's sleep, these buildings which as soon as complete are swept away to make room for others, are as thorough a revelation of the character of the child as affairs of state and complicated transactions are of the grown man. And if the parent sees a grasping selfishness in his child, or a domineering inconsiderateness of every one but himself, as he plays at buying and selling, building and visiting, he knows that these same qualities will come out in the real work of life, and will unfit their possessor for the best work, and prevent him from honourable and generous conduct, and all the highest functions and duties of life. So our Lord, observant of the dispositions we are showing as we deal with the shadowy objects and passing events of this seeming substantial world, marks us off as fit or unfit to be entrusted with what is real and abiding. If this man shows such greed for the gold he knows he must in a few years leave, will he not show a keener, intenser selfishness in regard to what is abiding? If he can trample on other people's rights for the sake of a pound or two, how can he be trusted to deal with what is infinitely more valuable? If here in a world where mistakes are not final, and which is destined to be burned up with all the traces of evil that are in it—if in a world which, after all, is a mere card-house, or in which we are apprentices learning the use of our tools, and busy with work which, if we spoil, we do no irreparable harm—if here we display incorrigible negligence and incapacity to keep a high aim and a good model before us, who would be so foolish as to let us loose among eternal matters, things of abiding importance, and in which mistake and carelessness and infidelity are irreparable? (*Marcus Dods, D.D.*) *We are being watched* :—A merchant sees among his clerks one whose look and bearing are prepossessing, and he thinks that by and by this lad might possibly make a good partner; he watches him, but he finds him gradually degenerating into slipshod ways of doing his work, coming down late in the mornings, and showing no zeal for the growth of the business; and so the thought grows in his mind, "If he is not faithful in that which is another man's, how can I give him the business as his own? I can't hand over my business to one who will squander what I have spent my life in accumulating; to one who has not sufficient liking for work to give himself heartily to it, or sufficient sense of honour to do it heartily whether he likes it or no. Much as I should like to lift him out of a subordinate situation, I cannot do so." Thus are determined the commercial and social prospects of many an unconscious youth, and thus are determined the eternal prospects of many a heedless servant of God, who little thinks that the Master's eye is upon him, and that by basting to be rich he is making himself eternally poor, and by slackness in God's service is ruining his own future. (*Ibid.*) *Influence of little things* :—A jest led to a war between two great nations. The presence of a comma in a deed lost to the owner of an estate one thousand pounds a month for eight months. The battle of Corunna, in 1809, is said to have been fought, and the life of that noble officer Sir John Moore sacrificed, through a dragoon stopping to drink while bearing despatches. A man lighting a fire on the sea-shore led to the Rev. John Newton's honoured labours and life of usefulness. *Little kindnesses* :—We sin by omitting cheap acts of beneficence in our daily walk and among our early companionship. The web of a merciful life is made up of these slender threads. (*J. W. Alexander, D.D.*) *Little sins* :—A man who was hung at Carlisle for house-breaking declared that his first step to ruin was taking a halfpenny out of his mother's pocket while she was asleep. Another offender, convicted of housebreaking at Chester, said at the gallows, "You are come to see a man die. Oh! take warning by me. The first beginning of my ruin was Sabbath-breaking. It led me

into bad company, and from bad company to robbing orchards and gardens, and then to housebreaking, and that has brought me to this place." *Faithfulness shown in restitution of wrongful gains*:—A brother in the ministry took occasion to preach on the passage, "He that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." The theme was, "that men who take advantage of others in small things have the very element of character to wrong the community and individuals in great things, where the prospect of escaping detection or censure is as little to be dreaded." The preacher exposed the various ways by which people wrong others; such as borrowing, by mistakes in making change, by errors in accounts, by escaping taxes and custom-house duties, by managing to escape postage, by finding articles and never seeking owners, and by injuring articles borrowed, and never making the fact known to the owner when returned. One lady the next day met her pastor, and said, "I have been to rectify an error made in giving me change a few weeks ago, for I felt bitterly your reproof yesterday." Another individual went to Boston to pay for an article not in her bill, which she noticed was not charged when she paid it. A man going home from meeting said to his companion, "I do not believe there was a man in the meeting-house to-day who did not feel condemned." After applying the sermon to a score or more of his acquaintances, he continued, "Did not the pastor utter something about finding a pair of wheels?" "I believe not, neighbour A. He spoke of keeping little things which had been found." "Well, I thought he said something about finding a pair of wheels, and supposed he meant me. I found a pair down in my lot a while ago." "Do you," said his companion, "know who they belong to? Mr. B. lost them a short time ago." The owner was soon in the possession of his wheels. (*Vermont Chronicle.*) *Unfaithfulness in little*:—A king appointed one servant over his gold treasure, another over his straw. The latter's honesty being suspected, he was angry because the gold had not been trusted to him. The king said, "Thou fool, if thou couldst not be trusted with straw, how can any one trust thee with gold?" (*Archbishop Trench.*) *Momentary unfaithfulness to be avoided*:—A Corsican gentleman, who had been taken prisoner by the Genoese, was thrown into a dark dungeon, where he was chained to the ground. While he was in this dismal situation the Genoese sent a message to him, that if he would accept of a commission in their service, he might have it. "No," said he; "were I to accept your offer, it would be with a determined purpose to take the first opportunity of returning to the service of my country. But I would not have my countrymen even suspect that I could be one moment unfaithful." **Ye cannot serve God and mammon.**—*The crime of avarice*:—I. REASONS WHY AVARICE SHOULD BE GUARDED AGAINST. 1. The avaricious man usually leads a miserable life, making no use of his wealth. 2. Avarice takes away a man's peace of mind. (1) The avaricious man is in constant disquietude—(a) Through terror of losing his possessions. (b) Through envy of others, and the craving to possess their property. (c) Through desire to accumulate more wealth. (2) The avaricious man is inconsolable at the loss of his riches. 2. Avarice is a base vice, and the source of many other vices. 3. Avarice almost inevitably leads to eternal ruin. II. MEANS TO BE ADOPTED FOR GUARDING AGAINST AVARICE. 1. Endeavour to know yourself, your inclinations, passions, desires; and examine yourself in order to ascertain whether you cannot find some symptom of avarice within yourself. Such symptoms are—(1) A greater confidence in temporal goods than in Almighty God (Psa. lii. 7). (2) Unscrupulousness in the manner of acquiring temporal goods. (3) Excessive grief at the loss of temporal goods. (4) If you do not use temporal goods for the glory of God, nor for your own and your neighbours' needs. 2. Strive to keep from your soul the vice of avarice. (1) By continual struggle against the concupiscence of money and riches (Psa. lxxii. 10). (2) By the exercise of opposite virtues, especially that of Christian charity. You will experience the joys earned by these virtues. (3) By supplication for the removal of the temptation. (*Chevassu.*) *The two masters*:—"No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other: or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. vi. 24). In one point of view, this sounds very strangely; for nothing is more certain than that we can serve two masters. Every child that is dutifully reared serves two masters—its father and its mother; and it is quite possible for one to be a servant of a whole family of masters. But in order that this may take place, it is indispensably necessary that the masters should be alike in feeling, and identical in interest. But if masters are antagonistic the one to the other, if their interests are not only different but conflicting, if to serve one of necessity puts you in opposition to the other, then it is impossible to

serve two. And the more you look at it the plainer it becomes. Suppose one man represents perfect honour, and another represents perfect meanness, and you undertake to serve both of them, what sort of success will you have? Suppose one man be called Truth, and another be called Falsehood, and you attempt to serve both of them, is it not plain that you will either hate the one and love the other, or else hold to the one and despise the other? You cannot serve both at the same time. No man can serve purity and lust at the same time. No man can serve good nature and anger at the same time. Are God and mammon, then, antagonistic? And what are the ways in which man is looked at from the two spheres—the Divine and the earthly? Mammon regards man as a creature of time and this world, and thinks of him, plans for him, educates him, and uses him, as if, like the beast of the field, he only had existence here, and as if his existence was only related to the comforts that belong to this state of being. But God looks upon man as a creature of eternal duration, passing through this world. The chief end and interest of men are also viewed antagonistically. In short, man in his immediate and visible good, is that which mammon regards. On the other hand, God regards not indifferently the interests of our body; but more He regards the interests of our *being*. Mammon builds men in the finer traits which they possess in common with animals. God would build men in those traits which they have in common with Him. One builds for this world exclusively. The other builds for this world and the next. There is nothing more certain than that a man's character depends upon his ruling purpose. Let us look at it. A man may be a thoroughly worldly man—that is, all his ruling aims, and desires, and expectations, may make him worldly; and yet he may be observant of external religious services. A man is not to be supposed to be less a worldly man because when the Sabbath day comes round he knows it. He may be, also, a believer in the gospel, and in the most evangelical and orthodox type of doctrine—as an idea. It is quite possible for a man to be supremely worldly, and yet to have strong religious feelings. There is nothing more common than instances which go to show that we like as a sentiment things that we do not like as an ethical rule. Nay, it is possible for a man to go further, and yet be a thoroughly worldly man. And here it is that the distinction comes in. Although a man may be a servant of mammon, and may serve him with heart and soul; yet, externally, there may be a great many appearances that look as though he was serving God. And men really seem to think that they can serve God and mammon! 1. There is reason to believe that the morality of multitudes of men, though they are good in some degree, leaves out that which alone can make it a ground of complacency and trust. A man may be a moral man, and leave out the whole of the life to come. The Greeks were moral men, many of them. The Romans were moral men, many of them. 2. There is reason to fear that the religion of multitudes of professors of religion is but a form of church-morality. You may tell me that this is a misjudgment. I hope it is. But what sort of lives are we living, when it is possible to misinterpret them? What if I should have occasion to say the same things about your allegiance to the government that I have said about your religion? There is not a man of any note in the community about whose allegiance you have any doubt. If I point to one man, you say, "He is not true to his country." If I point to another man, you say, "He is loyal"; and you state facts to prove it. You say, "When his personal interest came in collision with the interest of the country, and one or the other had to be given up, he gave up his personal interest." But when God's claims come in collision with your personal interests, God's claims go down, and your personal interests go up. Now, there ought to be no cause for doubt that you are Christians. A man is bound to live towards his country so that there shall be no mistake about his patriotism. And God says, "You are bound to live towards Me so that in some way men shall see that you are My children." You are bound to live in everything as you do in some things. You are attempting, partly through ignorance, partly by reason of carelessness, and partly on account of too low an estimate of the sacredness of your religious obligations, to serve God with your right hand, and mammon with your left; and men see it, and they doubt you; and that is not the worst of it—they doubt God, they doubt Christ, they doubt the reality of religion. And to be the occasion of doubt concerning matters of such grave importance, is culpable. No man, therefore, has a right to allow any mistake to exist in the matter of his Christian character. There is need, Christian brethren, of severe tests in this particular. You need to settle these questions: "Where is my allegiance? Am I with God, and for God supremely?" (H. W. Beecher.) *The two contrary masters, or the*

inconsistency of the service of God and the world :—For the opening and prosecuting of which words, consider—1. What these two masters are. 2. What it is to serve them. 3. How none can serve them both. 4. Why none can serve them both. 5. The use and application. For the first of these, these two masters are God and the world, but with much difference, as we may see severally. God is a Lord and Master absolutely, properly, and by good right in Himself; being in His own nature most holy, most mighty, most infinite in glory and sovereignty over all His creatures. Again, He is a Lord and Master in relation to us: and not only by right of creation and preservation as we are men and creatures, but also by right of redemption and sanctification, as new men and new creatures. 1. He hath made a covenant with us, first of works, and then of grace. 2. He hath appointed our work. 3. He hath as a Master appointed us liberal wages, even a merciful reward of eternal life. Thus is God a Lord and Master. Now, on the other side, the world is called a master or lord, not by any right in itself, or over us, but—1. By usurpation. 2. By man's corruption, and defection from the true God. 3. By the world's general estimation, and acceptance of the wealth and mammon, as a lord and great commander; which appeareth—(1) By subjecting themselves to the basest services of wealth for wealth. (2) By affecting wealth as the chief good. (3) By depending (as servants on their masters) on their wealth. Concerning the service of these masters, we must mark, that our Saviour saith not, A man cannot serve God that hath riches, but, He cannot serve God and riches. For he that cannot distinguish between having the world, and serving the world, cannot understand this text and conclusion of Jesus Christ. Our Lord well knew it was lawful both to have, and to seek, and to use the world holily and humbly. But how may we conceive that one cannot be servant to two masters, or to these two? In these conditions: 1. Not at the same time. 2. Not in their proper commands; for as they are contrary lords, so they command contrary things, and draw to contrary courses. One calls to works of mercy, charity, compassion, liberality, and the like; the other to cruelty, and unmercifulness, to shut our eyes from beholding our own flesh, to shut our ear from the cry of the poor, to shut our purse and hand from the charitable relief of Christ's poor members. And how can one man obey both these in their contrary commands? 3. No man can serve two masters in sovereignty, unless they be subordinate one to the other, and so their commands concur in order one to another, and cross not one another. The reasons whereof are these: 1. A servant is the possession of his master; and one possession can have but one owner and possessor at once. 2. The servant of the world sets up his wealth as an idol in his heart; by which the worldling forsakes the true God, and turns to most gross idolatry. So of the second reason. 3. The apostle (Rom. vi. 16) asks thus, "Know ye not, that to whomsoever ye give yourselves as servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye do obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" But the distinction implies that they cannot obey both together. 4. No man can serve these two masters, because a man cannot divide his heart between God and the world; and if he could, God will have no part of a divided heart, as Elijah said in that case (1 Kings xviii. 20). How may I know what master I serve? 1. Whom hast thou covenanted withal? God or the world? To whom hast thou wholly resigned thyself? Is thy strength become God's? Is thy time His? thy labour His? 2. Every servant is commanded by his master. God's servant knows his Lord's mind and pleasure, and readily attempts it, even in most difficult commandments. 3. Every servant receives wages of his own master, and thrives by his service. Of whom doest thou receive wages? 4. Which of these two masters lovest thou best? He that is thy master, thy affection must cleave to him, as is said of the prodigal. 5. If thou beest the servant of God, thy wealth is His servant as well as thyself. (*T. Taylor, D.D.*) *Oneness of service* :—What we all want is unity of character. We are, most of us, too many characters folded up into one. This want of unity of character is the chief secret of almost all our weakness. No life can be a strong life which has not a fixed focus. Another consequence of this uncertainty of aim and this divided allegiance is that we really are missing the goodness and happiness of everything. We have too much religion thoroughly to enjoy the world, and too much of the world thoroughly to enjoy religion. Our convictions haunt us in the world, and our worldliness follows us even to our knees. But there is a worse consequence than this. The Holy Spirit is grieved in us, and Christ is wounded, and the Father is dishonoured. For, which is worse, to be half loved or not to be loved at all? Where you have a right to all, is not partial love a mockery and an insult? The question, the all-important question is, What is

the remedy? But first, before I speak of that, let me draw your attention to a distinction which is not without its force. The word "masters" in the text does not actually carry the meaning of "masters" and "servants" in the ordinary acceptation of the phrases. It might be literally translated, according to the root of the word, "proprietors" or "lords." "No one can serve two proprietors." This emphasizes the sentence. God has a property, all property, in you. By right you are His. The world is not your proprietor. You are not made to be the world's. But now I return to the question, "How can we best attain to serve one lord?" I should answer first, without hesitation, by making that one Master, or Proprietor, or Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ. And more than this. God has given the government and the sovereignty of this world till the day of judgment, to Jesus Christ. Therefore He is our Proprietor and our Master. Therefore I say, begin with believing that you are forgiven. Let Jesus—as your own dear Saviour—occupy His right place in your heart. The rest is quite sure. You will want no other Master. All life is service. The happiness or the unhappiness of the service depends on who is the master. If self is the master, the service will be a failure! If the world is the master, the service will soon become drudgery! If Christ is the master, the service will be liberty; the law will be love, and the wages life, life for ever. If self, and the world, and Christ, be all masters, the diluted service will be nothing worth. There will be no "service" at all. Self will go to the top, and self will be disappointed. But if the "Master" be one, and that one God, that concentration will give force to every good thing within you. Life will be a great success. The service will be sweet. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Impossible to serve God and mammon*:—We cannot possibly serve both God and mammon. "When you see a dog following two men," says Ralph Erskine, "you know not to which of them he belongs while they walk together; but let them come to a parting-road, and one go one way, and the other another way, then will you know which is the dog's master. So while a man may have the world and a religious profession too, we cannot tell which is the man's master, God or the world; but stay till the man come to a parting-road. God calls him this way, and the world calls him that way. Well, if God be his master, he follows truth and righteousness, and lets the world go; but if the world be his master, then he follows the flesh and the lusts thereof, and lets God and conscience go." It is always so. The lukewarm can never be trusted, but the heartily-loving are ever loyal.

Vers. 14-18. *The Pharisees also, who were covetous.—Lovers of money*:—Those "lovers of money" heard what things? As rulers of the people they heard the parable of the "unjust steward," and their own doom as men entrusted with the priceless riches of God's teaching pronounced: "How is it that I hear this of thee?" They heard, "He that is faithful in that which is least"—money—"is faithful also in much." I. "LOVERS OF MONEY" DERIDE A STRICT SCRUPULOSITY. "Be faithful in the least." Many of the customs of trades and professions are out of harmony with the gospel teaching on strict conscientiousness. II. "LOVERS OF MONEY" DERIDE THE TEACHING OF THE GOSPEL ON SELF-DENIAL. Self-denial and a race for wealth are incompatible things: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." III. "LOVERS OF MONEY" DERIDE THOSE WHO CALL THE PURSUIT OF RICHES THE WORSHIP OF "MAMMON." IV. "LOVERS OF MONEY" NEED ROUSING BY A STERNER TEACHING. Was not the Saviour impelled to the utterance of the parable of "Dives and Lazarus"—look at it—by the looks of contempt implied in the word *ἐπεκρίψας*, the distended nostril and curled lip of these Pharisees? Does this help to explain our Lord's unusual severity: "In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment?" Nothing will shake "the lover of money" but stern teaching, and not always that. (*Clerical World.*) *Ye are they which justify yourselves before men*.—Men often highly esteem what God abhors:—Show how and why it is that men highly esteem that which God abhors. 1. They have a different rule of judgment. God judges by one rule; they by another. God's rule requires universal benevolence; their rule is satisfied with any amount of selfishness, so it be sufficiently refined to meet the times. The world adopts an entirely different rule, allowing men to set up their own happiness as their end. But God's rule is, "Seek not thine own." God regards nothing as virtue except devotion to the right ends. The right end is not one's own, but the general good. Hence God's rule requires virtue, while man's rule at best only restrains vice. Men very inconsiderately judge themselves and others, not by God's rule, but by man's. Here I must notice some of the evidences of this, and furnish some illustrations. Thus,

for example, a mere negative morality is highly esteemed by some men. Again, a religion which is merely negative is often highly esteemed. So also of a religion which at best consists of forms and prayers, and does not add to these the energies of benevolent effort. Again, the business aims and practices of business men are almost universally an abomination in the sight of God. Professed Christians judge themselves falsely, because they judge by a false standard. One of the most common and fatal mistakes is to employ a merely negative standard. The good Christian in the world's esteem is never abrupt, never aggressive, yet he is greatly admired. He has a selfish devotion to pleasing man, than which nothing is more admired. Now, this may be highly esteemed among men; but does not God abhor it? (*C. G. Finney, D.D.*) **God knoweth your hearts.**—*The heart-searcher*:—I. This truth is eminently calculated to deepen our sense of the unapproachable greatness of the God with whom we have to do. II. This truth illustrates, not the greatness only, but also the forbearance and mercy of God. III. This truth should teach you, my brethren, the folly, not to dwell on the guilt, of formality and hypocrisy. IV. This truth is adapted to console and encourage the often misjudged and afflicted people of God. V. This truth assures us beforehand of the equity of the Divine awards at the judgment-day. (*C. M. Merry.*) **God's knowledge of the heart**:—At the present day many persons have photographs of their faces taken, which they present to their friends. But if it were possible to have an album of photographs taken of our sinful souls, revealing and blazoning forth all the evil deeds they had each done, all the evil words they had ever spoken, and all the evil thoughts they had ever thought, how hideous and horrible would such pictures be! Would any man dare to give his true soul-photograph to any brother man? I think not; and far less to his friends. Yet the things and thoughts we would thus conceal from others, and even from ourselves, are all known to God. He has full and faithful photographs of all; for He is perfectly cognizant of every single one of our evil deeds, and words, and imaginations. Nay, possibly we unwittingly carry about with us complete photographs of our own souls. May not the unsaved soul carry this record with it at death? May not unsaved sinners be thus both their own self-accusers and witnesses before the judgment-seat of Christ? Nor can anything except His blood, "which cleanseth from all sin," blot and wash out the record of our iniquities, and prepare the soul, by the grace of God, to receive the image of His Son. (*Sir James Simpson.*) **Every man presseth into it.**—**Violence victorious**:—I. THE STATE OF THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. 1. A kingdom. 2. The kingdom of heaven. II. THE DISPOSITION OF THOSE WHO SEEK THIS KINGDOM. Violent. 1. Between us and the blessed state we aim at there is much opposition; and therefore there must be violence. (1) The means of grace and salvation are opposed from within us. (2) There is also opposition from the world. (a) Snares and delights, to quench our pleasure in the good things of the Spirit. (b) Fears, terrors, and scandals, to scare us from doing what we ought. 2. God will have us get these things with violence, the truth of our profession. 3. God will have us get these things with violence, that we may value them more when we have them. 4. The excellence of the thing requires violence. 5. The necessity requires it. The kingdom of heaven is a place of refuge as well as a kingdom to enrich us. III. THE SUCCESS OF THIS EAGERNESS. The violent take the kingdom by force. Why? 1. Because it is promised to the violent (*Matt. vii. 7; Rev. iii. 19-21*). 2. The spirit whereby a man is earnest is a victorious spirit. The Spirit of God possesses them; and with His help they cannot fail. 3. Only the violent take it, because God offers it on this condition alone. 4. Only the violent can prize it when they have it. (*R. Sibbes, D.D.*) **Taken by force**:—Let us look in a large way at this important truth. Everything great on earth has to be achieved by long, earnest, persistent toil. If you seek to become master of any art, any literature, any science, any accomplishment, you do not sit down and say, "God is the giver of all good, and I shall not be so arrogant as to strive for that which He alone can bestow." You know very well it can only be had by meeting every obstacle and conquering it. The very value of the thing is estimated often by the straining endeavour, the unconquerable zeal, and the ceaseless labour which are requisite to its attainment. We so often see only the results in certain lives, and not the long processes which have been leading up to those results, that we are tempted sometimes to forget this. A poet writes some verses that cause the whole nation's soul to burn and glow; an orator makes some speech that thrills his country to its very heart's core; a philosopher observes some phenomena which open up a whole field of scientific truth. We are dazzled with the

success; we are forgetful of the long, patient hours of study and of thought which have gone before. Millions had seen apples fall before Newton did, and it revealed nothing to them; millions had seen the kettle-lid blown off by steam before Watt did, and it suggested no thought to them; millions had lost their dearest friend before Tennyson lost Hallam, and they wrote no "In Memoriam"; millions had watched nations reeling with the shock of revolution before Burke gazed on the shattered throne and the polluted altar of France, and no burning words of eloquence fell from their lips or from their pen. To the souls trained in patient thought the revelation of great truth comes—or rather, what are common facts to others are revelations to them. Don't call these things accidents. "The accidental falling of an apple was the cause of the discovery of the laws of gravity," says a popular treatise. A fearful untruth. The cause of the discovery was the long period of deep self-sacrificing thought which Newton had given to Nature. "What a lucky man Newton was to have that apple fall before him!" said a young man once, in my hearing. "Rather," said a thoughtful man, standing by, "what a lucky apple to fall before Newton!" There is a world of truth in that. So one might go through the whole range of human experience and culture, and everywhere the kingdom that you want to become master of has to be taken by force. The door is opened to the persistent knocking. The bread is given to the unwearied demand. The treasure is found by the one who has been seeking. Now we come to the highest life of all—to the culture of that part of our nature which transcends all else. Is it not this great principle which pervades all the physical and mental world; which we see in every tiny plant as it struggles through the earth towards the light, in every mighty oak scarred with the lightnings and storms of ages, in every torrent that fights its way towards the ocean; which we see in every achievement of physical science, in every path she has constructed across mountain or morass, in every railroad for which she has torn and blasted a way through the granite of the earth; which we see in every great painting that has glowed with beauty on the canvas, in every great work of the sculptor who has made the cold marble breathe and live; which we see in every page of every great book in which Science records her facts, or poet, or historian, or philosopher has penned his researches and his thoughts—is not, I say, this great principle, which thus meets us everywhere—in all noble results, and all great achievements, in every department of human thought and life—to be found anywhere in the grander life of the immortal soul? Surely it is, brethren, and we ignore the teaching of Christ and of His apostles if we regard Christ's religion as merely a means by which we are to be saved from all trouble and responsibility about the future. There are people who tell you that all you have to do is to "accept Christ," "believe in Him," and then He has done all for you—you need have no more anxiety or trouble. All through those Epistles, which are so full of the gospel of the grace of God, and where Christ and Him crucified is the central fact of the Christian faith, the apostle, in words which thrill with the living power of deep personal experience, speaks of the Christian life as a ceaseless, protracted, fearful struggle. He exhausts things sacred and profane to find imagery to depict and to impress this truth. The Christian life is a race for which no previous preparation is too careful; in which every nerve is to be strained, and on which all our force is to be concentrated, that we may "obtain the prize" (1 Cor. ix. 24-27). (*T. T. Shore, M.A.*)

Ver. 17. Than one tittle of the law to fail.—*Power and perpetuity of law*:—If you have read the Pentateuch, and especially the books of Exodus and Leviticus, with care, you have perhaps wondered why a system of laws, so complicated, so careful of little things, so rigidly exact in its directions about them, should ever have been enacted. Viewing it in certain aspects, it may be that a sort of half suspicion has crossed your minds that legislation of this kind is really unworthy of such a being as God. But when the purpose of its Divine Author is seen, when the relation of the Law of Moses to the Jews as a separated people and to the gospel dispensation is fully understood, the whole system appears in quite a new light. The marks of Divine wisdom and goodness are clearly discernible in all its parts, even in its minutest details. This Mosaic code is "the Law" spoken of in the text. It embodies many precepts of universal application and eternal authority—it included, indeed, the whole moral law; but as a code, it was enacted for a specific end, and was to continue in force for a specific period. Until this end was gained, and this period completed, not a jot or tittle of it could be annulled. The

system possessed all the mighty power of law—nothing could set it aside. To regard or to treat any one of its provisions as an effete or antiquated or useless thing, was, in effect, to charge the Divine Lawgiver with folly. Hence the strong language in which our Lord asserts its power and its perpetuity until the fulness of the time had come. "Heaven and earth may pass away, but one jot or tittle of the law cannot fail." These words announce a great truth; what is here affirmed of the law in a distinctive sense is true of law universally. God, who called the universe into existence by the word of His power, governs it according to the counsel of His own will. Now the great truth which the text asserts is this, *viz.*, THAT THE LAWS WHICH GOVERN THE UNIVERSE ARE OF INFINITELY MORE CONSEQUENCE THAN THE UNIVERSE ITSELF—that it is of unspeakably more importance that the former should be maintained than that the latter should exist—that all the creatures of God, rational and irrational, should obey the laws to which He has been pleased to subject them, that they should work in harmony with these enactments, than that any or all of them should be kept in being. Glorious as are all the works of God, yet if you should take any one of them, consider it apart from all others, or view it as a mere isolated thing, you would perceive little, if any, excellence in it. It would indeed bespeak the creative energy of Him who made it, but you could not discover from it alone whether He is wise and good, or the reverse. It is only when you regard it in its relations to other things, and ascertain *why* it was made, and see its exact fitness to an end, that its real glory and greatness as a work of God shine forth. How beautiful to us is the spectacle of a field of waving corn? Its very verdure is refreshing to the eye, because adapted to the structure of our organ of vision, while its yellow ripeness gives the promise of an abundant supply of the food we need. But—if we may imagine such a thing—transfer it to a world of creatures with a constitution totally unlike ours, its beauty would vanish because its fitness to an end would be lost. The glory of creation, then, arises mainly from the benign ends and perfect adaptations of its countless parts. And hence it is that the universe must be, as we have already said, under law to God, and that the maintenance of the laws which govern it is vastly more important than the existence of the universe itself. In the working of the stupendous mechanism of the heavens, all is orderly and harmonious so long as the law which governs its movements is obeyed. But suppose the reverse of this to be the case—that the law of gravitation was liable to incessant interruptions, that the forces which produce the beautiful steadiness we now observe operated according to no fixed rule, either as to direction or degree, so that satellites should rush off into boundless space, or dash furiously against each other, and the planets, starting from their orbits, should wander at their will through immensity, or should be suddenly deluged with the fogs or the flames (as the case may be) of a comet, while this fair earth of ours, according as chance drove her near to or far distant from the sun, were converted into a fiery furnace or a globe of ice. We may try to fancy the state of things under such a reign of anarchy, though the boldest imagination must come far short of the reality. But the main question is, can we suppose that God would suffer, even for a moment, such a lawless universe to exist? No. He is a "God of order," and it were far better to remand creation to its original nothingness, than to permit disorder and confusion thus to gain the mastery over it; better annihilate it at once, than not maintain its laws in full supremacy and force. "Heaven and earth may pass away, but one jot or tittle of the laws shall not fail." Let us, if you please, take another illustration from THE EARTH ON WHICH WE DWELL. Here, too, we observe a grand and complicated system of physical operations incessantly going on, of physical laws perpetually at work. But suppose that the whole of this wonderful economy of nature were mysteriously disturbed—that her processes, apparently so complicated, yet never confused, were suddenly left to chance, and were subject to no laws, so that men sowed fields and reaped nothing, and then again where they planted nothing they reaped abundance; so that their food one day ministered nourishment, and the next deadly poison; nor could they tell whether the water they drank would quench or increase their thirst; that the darkness of night, the light of day, the heat of summer, the frost of winter, lasted through periods so indefinite, and were liable to changes so great and sudden, that none could predict what a moment would bring forth; I ask, again, could God permit this godly earth of ours to fall into a condition so utterly lawless and so destructive to all the creatures that dwell upon its surface? No indeed. Better a thousandfold that it were blotted from existence than that it should become such a prey of

anarchy, such a plaything of chance, without law, without life—a world as dishonouring to its Maker as it would be intolerable for man. But let us come nearer home and TAKE AN ILLUSTRATION FROM MAN HIMSELF. In whatever aspect we view him, whether as a physical, social, intellectual, or moral being, we find him the subject of laws—of laws unchangeable as the eternal Lawgiver Himself; and harsh as the announcement may sound, it is nevertheless true that not to maintain these laws would be far greater evil than the destruction of the human race; better that men should perish than that these laws should be set aside. We may not trifle with any one of these laws, to which He who “formed us of clay and made us men” hath subjected our physical nature. If we do, it is at our peril; for although these laws are not enforced by precisely the same penalty, yet we should ever remember that each has a penalty of its own; and whether it be more or less severe, we must endure the punishment if we venture to violate the law. Let the motive which prompts a man to disregard the laws of health, or the manner in which the thing is done, be what it may; let him, for example, turn night into day—whether he be a student, whose intense zeal for knowledge keeps him at his books when he should be in bed, or a miserable sensualist, who gives his midnight hours to revelry and banqueting—the inevitable result to him will be a ruined constitution. God will not modify the order He has established so as to suit the convenience of your depraved appetites; He will not change His laws to accommodate either the unwise student or the miserable sensualist. “Heaven and earth shall pass, but not one jot or tittle of His law.” So it is with men considered as SOCIAL BEINGS. There are laws of social life ordained of God, and though we cannot always trace their operation so distinctly as we can the working of those which govern the material creation, we may still be certain that the former are just as uniform and immutable as the latter. We only need to open our eyes and look at what is going on around us to be convinced of this truth. Economy, diligence, prudence, truthfulness, unswerving probity, on the one hand, and extravagance, self-indulgence, falsehood, deceit, trickery, on the other, do not yield their respective fruits at random or by chance. No. There is a law which renders these results invariable. “A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, nor a corrupt tree good fruit.” The trickster, the time-server, the two-faced flatterer, may secure the position or the office on which his heart is set, but real honour and lasting power he never wins. God’s law forbids it. And the experience of all ages embodied in the proverbs of all nations, as well as the word of eternal truth, proves that in the long run such men always reap their proper reward, and go at last to their own place. Thus far we have viewed the teaching of our text mainly as it bears upon men’s present interests and their earthly life. It contains lessons of still higher moment. We know that this world is the prelude of another, and even here below we have, in the relation of youth to age, a striking image of the relation which subsists between this world and the next, between our present life and the everlasting life to come. He who wastes the period which God has allotted to make a man of him—a period short indeed, as it consists of only a few years, but sufficient for the purpose if rightly improved—wastes what he never can replace. Such is the law of our present earthly existence, and in it we see shadowed forth the law of our future and eternal life. The very gospel, which brings life and immortality to light, emphatically proclaims that sin and suffering are conjoined by a law immutable as the eternal throne. It is surely needless for me to bring arguments to substantiate the charge that you are a sinner against God. Your own conscience confesses it, “your own heart condemns” you. Well, this word of Him who cannot lie tells you, in terms too plain to be misunderstood, that perish you must for ever, unless saved through the righteousness and atonement of the Son of God. “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle of the law cannot fail.” Let me, in conclusion, add as a word of warning, that the instrument with which the devil most successfully assails the young and the old is scepticism in regard to the momentous truth taught in the text. This is his grand temptation, and was the weapon with which he gained his dismal triumph over the common mother of our race. “Why not eat of the tree of knowledge,” he asked, “that stands in the midst of the garden—its form so beautiful to the sight, its fruit so sweet to the taste?” “I am under a law,” replied Eve, “that forbids me to touch it, and it is enforced by the awful penalty of death.” “But surely,” rejoined the tempter, “you must have misapprehended the meaning of your Maker; it is not to be supposed that He will ever inflict upon you a punishment so dreadful for an offence so trifling.” Alas! “She took, she ate, earth

felt the wound, and Nature from her seat sighing, gave signs of woe that all was lost." Precisely so does the same "father of lies" deceive the youth with reference to the connection that subsists between the springtide and the summer and autumn of our present life. He who is old enough to understand anything, however inconsiderate of the personal bearing of the truth, knows perfectly well that he must sow the seed if he would reap the harvest. (*J. Forsyth, D.D.*)

Vers. 19-31. There was a certain rich man.—*Dives and Lazarus*.—I. THE ALLOTMENTS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE ON EARTH ARE NOT ALWAYS EVENLY BASED UPON A REGISTER OF HUMAN DESERT. 1. The rich man is not offered as a luminous exhibition of personal worth (see vers. 19-21). 2. On the other hand, Lazarus was a beggar, and frightfully diseased. His condition was pitiable. But it does not follow that he had been immoral, nor that he was under judgment for crime. Neither of these men represented in the parable took his moral state, or received his everlasting reward, from his earthly lot. II. THE QUESTION AS TO A MAN'S ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD TURNS ON PERMANENT CHARACTER. 1. The name which this poverty-stricken invalid bears is all that is given us at this stage in the story to indicate that he was a religious man. It is simply the ancient Eleazar put into the New Testament Lazarus—the Hebrew translated to Greek—and means "God is my help." It is plain that our Lord Jesus designed this as a sufficient description of him. As Alford shrewdly remarks, he purposed "to fill in the character of the poor man." He doubtless gave the appellation, as Bunyan bestowed the name of his hero in *Pilgrim's Progress*: he called his name "Christian" because he was a Christian. And this beggar here is called "God is my help," because he was a good man, living according to his light by the help of God. 2. But the other man's character is under a full exhibition. He was luxuriously self-seeking. He lavished his wealth upon himself, and fed his appetites unrestrainedly. He was inhumane. The very brutes in Perea were less brutal than Dives. The rich man was not only in his conduct heartless, but in his custom irreligious; for the Jewish law demanded consideration of the poor with a hundred reiterated precepts; these he habitually disobeyed. And in the end of the tale we have the intimation that, above everything else, Dives never paid any attention to what Moses and the prophets were thundering in his ears from the Scriptures about making preparation for another world which was lying out beyond this. We reach the conclusion that in this parable the rich man represents a worldly sinner. III. AGAIN: WE LEARN HERE THAT DEATH IS THE INEVITABLE EVENT WHICH USHERS IN THE CERTAIN IMMORTALITY OF EACH HUMAN SOUL. 1. Both of these men died. 2. Both of these men found themselves living after they had died. IV. WHAT COMES AFTER DEATH IS TO US OF FAR MORE IMPORTANCE THAN WHAT COMES BEFORE. 1. For, first, it gathers up now into itself whatever went before, and includes all its consequences. 2. And then what comes after death introduces fresh and heavy experiences of its own. The contrast is offered of highest felicity with most extreme suffering. That other life will be quite as sensitive as this, and possibly more so. Power of suffering may be augmented. There will be recognition of friends and relatives and neighbours in that new existence. These souls all appear to know each other in those moments of terrible candour. And they understand each other, too, at last; there is great plainness of speech among them. V. THE GOSPEL INVITATION REACHES ITS LIMIT IN THIS STATE OF OUR EXISTENCE. 1. There will be no increase in the ordinary means of grace. 2. No novel form of address will be possible (vers. 30, 31). (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The rich and the poor, here and hereafter*.—The case is that of one who had great wealth, and enjoyed it, and lived handsomely, but took no thought to the poor brother outside. He had his evil things in the same hour in which the brother in the grand house had his good things; and this went on, day after day, while the two men neared another life: but when that life began, there came a change. Now, it seems clear, from the way in which the case is put, that this change, which was in fact a revolution, and brought with it a precise reversal of the states of those two men, came in a line of predetermined events. It implies the working of a law, which may have been fulfilled in countless instances already, and is destined to act and rule so long as the lots of men are unequal in this life. If this be so, it ought to make those of us uneasy, who perceive, in comparing themselves with their neighbours, that they are having their good things now. It seems a just inference from this parable, which was undoubtedly intended as a lesson and a warning for us all, that Almighty God, the Righteous and Just, although He may for the present permit the poor to suffer, has made a law in the

due execution whereof there may be expected a complete upset of conditions by and by, on our passage into another life. Many years ago, in the early winter, I found myself one evening at a rich man's table, with others bidden to the feast. We had our good things. Nothing was wanting to the completeness of our entertainment in which appeared, in their order, all delicious viands, with condiments and delicacies, and whatsoever is pleasant to the eyes and good for food. There shone the precious metals, and rare porcelains and crystal, while, amidst roses and other choice flowers appeared, in rich warm hues as of the ruby and the topaz, the fruit of the vines of distant lands. As one surveyed the cheerful company under the soft brilliancy of many lights, it was a pleasant scene; in their lifetime they were receiving their good things; and not as dissolute revellers, but after the way of the highly respectable, to whom all this came as to men and women to the manner born, and living, as became their station, the life of the rich and the free. In less than an hour after leaving that scene, I found myself descending, by dim and muddy steps, the basement of a miserable house in the same city, and entering a room some feet below the level of the sidewalk. What light there was in that forlorn apartment came from a dull tallow candle; the feeble ray fell on bare walls and a bare floor, and showed no furniture but an old bedstead, without clothes or bedding, or so much as a truss of straw. On the floor sat two children, thinly clad, crouching close to an old rust-eaten stove, in which a faint redness glimmered through the choked-up ashes, the very mockery of a fire. The little ones had no food; their mother, they said, was abroad to see if she could get them a bit of something to eat, while a neighbour had given her the candle by the aid of which I made out the pitiful scene. There was the other side of the parable; the old, old story: "and likewise Lazarus evil things." Under the winter's evening, the two rooms told their separate stories to the Lord; the "good things" there, the "evil things" here; just as it has been from the beginning. Alas! the heart dies down at such contrasts. Who could look on two such pictures within the same hour, and admit that things are as they ought to be in this world? And if, at such a moment, he remembers the words of the parable, it cannot but occur to him, as was just now said, that there must be a hidden law of adjustment, whose working will be revealed in due season. He must say to himself: It cannot be that these things are to last for ever; and moreover, it cannot be that he who is indifferent to them while they last can finally go unpunished. Indifference on these points is crime; and crime must bring retribution. We have, then, in the words of our Lord in the parable a very serious intimation; and, in common daily experience, an argument of great persuasive force urging us to heed it. It is one of the gravest of questions how we are to deal with the terrible problems thus raised; problems which could not be more urgent or more practical; which relate to both worlds at once; to the estates of men in this life, and to the estates of those same men in the life hereafter. We want light on a dark question; infidelity and anti-Christian social science fail us here; the latter amuses us with a jack-a-lantern, leading nowhere but into greater embarrassments; the former blows out what light remains, and by destroying society reduces all men everywhere to present terror and ultimate barbarism. Fortunately for the human race there are ideas as different from infidel or socialistic notions as light from darkness; ideas put forth by our blessed Lord, and kept afloat by the powerful agency of that religion which He founded and sustained. In these ideas, fully realized and widely applied, resides the only hope of relief. Let us recall them to our thoughts and see in what subtle and perhaps unsuspected way they help us all—the poor who are in misery here, and the rich who are in peril hereafter. First, then, Christianity never has attempted to eliminate the rich as a class. It is God's will that there shall always be the rich and the poor. But although the rich are permitted to be among us and to have a place in His Church, yet another thing is true. They are told that their riches are a real and a deadly peril; as if a man had in his house what might at any moment take fire or explode and destroy his life. And, more than this: the vast difference between them and the poor is one of those which seem to be unfair and unjust, in a human point of view. I mean that if you take man and man there is no reason *a priori* why the rich man should not be in the poor man's place and the poor man in the rich man's, and often no reason can be found in the characters of the men themselves. "Why is not that poor brother where I am and I in his place? It seems scarcely just to him now; it cannot go on for ever." If all the rich felt thus the sorrows of the poor would be at end, even for this life; and the rich would feel thus if they were penetrated with the spirit of the

gospel. Even so much as there is (and blessed be God! there is much of this nobility of Christian love), has done and is doing a vast deal of good, and alleviating the misery and sorrow of the poor. (*Morgan Dix, D.D., Dives and Lazarus*.)—I. THE RICH MAN IN HIS AFFLUENCE AND ENJOYMENTS. II. LAZARUS IN HIS POVERTY. 1. A beggar. 2. Homeless. 3. Afflicted in person. III. THE DEATH OF LAZARUS. 1. At his death he becomes the subject of angelic ministration. 2. He is conveyed in triumph to glory. IV. THE DEMISE OF THE RICH MAN. 1. His riches could not save him from death. 2. They could only secure him an imposing funeral. Lessons: 1. That piety on earth is often allied with poverty and suffering. 2. That earthly prosperity and magnificence are no proofs of the Divine favour. 3. That whatever be our condition in this world, we are travelling towards another. 4. That death is inevitable to all stations and ranks. (*J. Burns, D.D., Dives and Lazarus after death*.)—I. WE SEE LAZARUS IN THE ABODE OF THE BLESSED. His state is one of—1. Repose, after the toils of life. 2. Dignity, after the humiliating scenes of his earthly adversity. 3. Abundance, after want. 4. Bliss, after grief and sorrow. II. WE ARE REFERRED TO DIVES AS CONSIGNED TO THE REGIONS OF THE LOST. "In torments." 1. Torments arising from the awful change he had experienced when death removed him from his wealth and luxuries on earth. 2. Torments from unallayed desires. He seeks now even for one drop of water, but in vain. 3. Torments from the bitter and despairing anguish of his doomed spirit. 4. Torments of keen self-reproach. 5. Torments from the direct infliction of the righteous wrath of God. 6. Torments from having the world of joy and glory within the range of his distracted vision. III. WE ARE REMINDED OF HIS UNAVAILING PRAYERS. 1. For the alleviation of his own agonies. 2. For additional means to save his brethren. Lessons: 1. How awful it is to die in a carnal, unregenerate state. 2. How connected are the concerns of time with the realities of eternity. "Whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap." 3. How all-important is real personal piety. 4. The sufficiency of the means appointed for man's salvation. (*Ibid.*) Lessons from the parable:—1. Let us learn here that "one thing is needful"—the care of the soul. What can riches do without this? 2. Let us learn, that, if the word of God revealed in the Scriptures, if the gospel of Jesus Christ, if the promises and the warnings written there, do not convince us, do not turn us to God—then nothing would. 3. Observe from this parable, that hell will be the portion not only of the grossly wicked, the swearer, the adulterer, the drunkard, the dishonest, the liar; for we read not, that the rich man was any of these: yet he perished. 4. What comfort may this parable give to the Christian in suffering! (*E. Blencowe, M.A.*) The rich man and Lazarus:—I. THE CONTRASTS. 1. In their external circumstances. (1) One rich; the other poor. (2) One elegantly clothed; the other as a beggar. (3) One sumptuously fed; the other desiring the rich man's crumbs. (4) One in health; the other physically wretched. (5) One socially influential; the other in beggarly isolation. 2. In their spiritual condition. (1) One exulting in his wealth; the other contented in his poverty. (2) One satisfied with his earthly possessions; the other seeking treasure in heaven. (3) One selfish and ungodly; the other a self-sacrificing believer. 3. In their eternal destiny. (1) One cast into hell; the other carried into heaven. (2) One tormented; the other comforted. (3) One associated with demons; the other in companionship with Abraham. (4) One in unalterable anguish; the other in permanent blessedness. II. THE LESSONS. 1. As to Providence. (1) Worldly prosperity no proof of acceptance with God. (2) Poverty and distress no proof of Divine abandonment. (3) Worldly isolation compatible with Divine companionship. 2. As to spiritual life. (1) Ease, luxury, and social elevation do not lead to spiritual-mindedness. (2) Beggary, physical helplessness, and deprivation of all worldly comforts, not able to wean the believer from God. (3) The Holy Scriptures God's best guide to spiritual truth. 3. As to the future state. (1) That man has an immortal nature. (2) That death does not affect the constituents of this nature in respect either to (a) its consciousness; (b) memory; (c) conscience. (3) That death does not affect the moral condition of this nature. (4) Heaven and hell, respectively appointed for the good and bad. (5) Heaven and hell, eternally separated by an impassable gulf. (*D. G. Hughes, M.A.*) A wealthy but sad family:—I. A WEALTHY FAMILY. "Wore purple and fine linen every day." Probably the great magnates of the neighbourhood. II. A LARGE FAMILY. Six brothers. III. A FAMILY WHICH DEATH HAD VISITED. "The rich man died and was buried." Death will neither be bribed by wealth, nor wait for preparation. IV. A FAMILY, ONE OF WHICH WAS IN HELL. Secular wealth is sometimes soul-degrading. V. A

FAMILY WHOSE SURVIVING BROTHERS WERE ALL ON THE ROAD TO RUIN. VI. A FAMILY WHOSE DECEASED BROTHER RECOILED AT THE IDEA OF REUNION. VII. A FAMILY WHO POSSESSED ALL THE MEANS THEY NEEDED OR WOULD EVER HAVE FOR SPIRITUAL SALVATION. (*Anon.*) *Opportunity for charity*:—"There was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate." This is a fact of importance in the history of Dives. Lazarus enters on the stage not merely to present a striking contrast to the rich man's state, but as one with whom the latter had relations. Lazarus represents opportunity for the exercise of humanity. That is the chief if not the sole purpose for which he appears in the first scene. (*A. B. Bruce.*) *Wealth making friends for the future*:—"What a vastly greater benefit Dives might have gained through Lazarus, had he only turned his acquaintance with him to account in good time. Had he made of him a friend with his worldly possessions he might have been his companion in paradise. But now, so far from attaining that felicity, he cannot even obtain the little favour he craves. (*Ibid.*) *Contrasts*:—"This parable is full of sharp contrasts. 1. There is the contrast in the life of these two men. The one rich, the other a beggar. The rich man had great possessions, yet one thing he lacked, and that was the one thing needful. Lazarus, the beggar, was after all the truly rich man, "as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." 2. Next, there is a contrast in the death of these two men. 3. And there is a contrast in the after time for these two men. The rich man was buried, doubtless, with great pomp. Some of us have seen such funerals. What extravagance and display take the place of reverent resignation and quiet grief! Of the beggar's burial place we know nothing. 4. But the sharpest contrast of all is in the world beyond, from which for a moment Jesus draws back the veil. (*H. J. Wilmot Buxton, M.A.*) *Dives and Lazarus*:—I. THE UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE GIFTS OF PROVIDENCE AMONGST MANKIND. II. THE DECISIVE ADJUSTMENT OF THINGS THAT TAKES PLACE AT DEATH. III. THE EVERLASTING SEPARATION THAT TAKES PLACE AT DEATH BETWEEN THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED. IV. THE VIEW THAT IS TAKEN OF THIS LIFE WHEN ONCE THEY GET OUT INTO THE FUTURE. V. THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE REVELATION THAT GOD HAS GIVEN TO CONFIRM ALL THESE THINGS. (*J. E. Beaumont.*) *Dives and Lazarus*:—I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF DIVES IN HIS TWO DIFFERENT STATES OF EXISTENCE. 1. In this world Dives was possessed—(1) Of an abundance of earthly good. (2) He knew how to enjoy this abundance, according to the usual meaning of this phraseology. (3) He was probably, so far as pertains to human nature in these circumstances, possessed of entire ease of mind. 2. At death his situation was in all respects reversed. (1) He was disembodied. (2) In absolute want of all things. (3) Despised. (4) Miserable. II. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF LAZARUS IN THE PRESENT WORLD, AND IN THE FUTURE. 1. In this world, Lazarus was—(1) In a state of the most abject poverty. (2) Miserable. 2. In the future world he was—(1) Rich in the abundance of all things. (2) Honourable. (3) Happy. (*T. Dwight, D.D.*) *The rich man and Lazarus*:—I. THE RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN THESE TWO MEN. 1. The parable speaks of a rich man and a poor man; and the resemblance between them may be traced, first, in the mortality of their bodies. They were both men, sinful men, and consequently dying men. No sooner is it said that "the beggar died," than it is added, "the rich man also died." And thus must end the history of us all. 2. These men resembled each other also in the immortality of their souls. The soul of the poorest amongst us is as immortal as the soul of the richest. 3. To these two points of resemblance between these men, we may add a third, not indeed absolutely expressed here, but, like the fact we have just alluded to, evidently to be inferred—accountableness to God. It was not chance which placed them where they are. They went thither from a bar of judgment. II. Let us proceed to notice, secondly, THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THESE TWO MEN, WITH THE GROUNDS OR REASONS OF IT. They differed in two points. 1. In their earthly portion. How great a contrast! Where shall we find its origin? It warns us against judging of men's character by men's condition. That diversity of condition, which we may wonder at but cannot alter, which has prevailed more or less in every age and nation notwithstanding every attempt to put an end to it, that diversity must be traced to the sovereign will of God. And He suffers, or rather He establishes it, because it is conducive to our welfare and His own glory. (1) It serves to show us, among other things, the poverty of the world and the all-sufficiency of God. (2) Besides, this diversity of condition, this mixture of poverty and riches on the earth, answers a further end—it proclaims to thoughtless man another world. There must be a world in which the just Governor of the universe will assert His justice, will vindicate His character, and render to the sons of men according their works.

2. The two men it speaks of differed in their eternal condition. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *The contrast in eternity* :—The first truth here suggested is that by the allotments of His providence in the present world, God does not distinguish between the righteous and the wicked. It has been the grief of many good men, that the dispensations of providence in this world afford so little evidence of the impartiality and rectitude of the Divine government. Whether it be to show the comparative meanness and significance of all earthly good, or that the Father of mercies is kind even to the evil and unthankful, or to illustrate their own impenitence and obduracy, or to give them the opportunity of filling up the measure of their iniquity! or to accomplish all these purposes—the fact is unquestioned—that thus far in the history of the world, by far the greater portion of those who, like the rich man in the parable, have fared sumptuously every day, have been of the wicked rather than of the righteous. The real disposition of the Divine mind toward holiness and sin must be exhibited in the distribution of good and evil in accordance with their respective characters. The present world, therefore, is but the season of trial, with a view to a future retribution. We must look beyond, if we would see the line of demarcation between the friends and foes of God drawn with visible and permanent distinctness. This difference will be clearly and distinctly made, at the end of the world. The time of trial on the earth was never designed to be long. Human life with all its invaluable opportunities, is but “a vapour that appeareth for a little while and then vanisheth away.” Every man then enters upon allotments, which, so far from being influenced by his earthly standing, are exclusively determined by his moral character. There will be a difference of character, of place, of society, of employment, of prospects. They will be unlike in every conceivable particular. (*G. Spring, D.D.*) *Worldly gratification and its terrible mockery* :—My friends, do you remember that old Scythian custom, when the head of a house died? How he was dressed in his finest dress, and set in his chariot, and carried about to his friends’ houses; and each of them placed him at his table’s head, and all feasted in his presence? Suppose it were offered to you, in plain words, as it is offered to you in dire facts, that you should gain this Scythian honour, gradually, while you yet thought yourself alive. Suppose the offer were this: You shall die slowly; your blood shall daily grow cold, your flesh petrify, your heart beat at last only as a rusted group of iron valves. Your life shall fade from you, and sink through the earth into the ice of Caina; but, day by day, your body shall be dressed more gaily, and set in higher chariots, and have more orders on the breast—crowns on its head, if you will. Men shall bow before it, stare and shout round it, crowd after it up and down the streets; build palaces for it, feast with it at their tables’ heads all the night long; your soul shall stay enough within it to know what they do, and feel the weight of the golden dress on its shoulders, and the furrow of the crown-edge on the skull—no more. Would you take the offer, verbally made by the death-angel? Would the meanest among us take it, think you? Yet practically and verily we grasp at it, every one of us, in a measure; many of us grasp at it in its fulness of horror. Every man accepts it, who desires to advance in life without knowing what life is; who means only that he is to get more horses, and more footmen, and more fortune, and more public honour, and—not more personal soul. He only is advancing in life, whose heart is getting softer, whose blood warmer, whose brain quicker, whose spirit is entering into living peace. And the men who have this life in them are the true lords or kings of the earth—they, and they only. (*John Ruskin.*) *The parable of the rich man and Lazarus* :—I proceed to observe the vast difference between men’s conditions in this world and the other. The rich man prospered here, and was afterwards tormented. And it is very agreeable to the wisdom of God to make such a difference between men’s conditions in this world and the other, and that for these two reasons: 1. For the trying of men’s virtue. 2. In order to the recompensing of it. From this consideration of the difference between the condition of men in this world and the other, we may infer—(1) That no man should measure his felicity or unhappiness by his lot in this world. (2) We should not set too great a value upon the blessings of this life. (3) We should not be excessively troubled if we meet with hardship and affliction here in this world, because those whom God designs for the greatest happiness hereafter may receive evil things here. (4) We should do all things with a regard to our future and eternal state. (*Archbishop Tillotson.*) *The true valuation of man* :—In this life, under the managery of ordinary Providence, the worst men may abound with the good things of this life, and better men are sometimes shortened and want even the necessary conveniences of life. Of this I shall speak but a word, because it is a

matter of easy observation. This David, Job, and Jeremiah stumbled at. That right, property, and title are founded in nature, not in grace. God gave the world and the things thereof unto the sons of men. If I would prove this to be mine, I must prove my title, not by miracle, but as the law and usage of the country where I dwell do state and determine; therefore I will say no more in this particular. I. That if we would take a right estimate of man, we must consider him in respect to a double state—here and hereafter—and that for these two reasons: 1. Because there is less of man here and more hereafter. 2. Because man is more valuable than this world represents him to be. I. The first of these I will make appear in three particulars, that there is less of man here and much more hereafter. 1. In respect of his time and continuance in being. 2. In this state there is less of right judgment of things and persons. Things here go under false appearances, and persons here are under the power of lying imaginations. 3. Less of weal or woe is in this state than in the other, for men in this state do not fully reap the fruit of their own ways; they do not come to the proof of the bargain they have made. In the respects before mentioned and others that possibly might be superadded, it appears that there is less of man in this world. But I may also adjoin, by way of exception, some particulars to the contrary, for I must acknowledge that in some respects our being in this world is very considerable. I will instance in three particulars—1. In respect of man's possibility. 2. In respect of man's opportunity. 3. In respect of man's well-grounded faith and expectation. I now come to the second reason. Why, if we would make a just estimate of man, we must consider him in respect to his double state of existence, in time and in eternity. For man is a much more valuable creature than his affairs in this world represent him to be, and this I will make appear in three particulars. Because—1. Man is here in his state of infancy; yea, he is as it were imprisoned and encumbered with a gross, dull, and crazy body. 2. In this state man is neither as he should be, nor, if he himself well consider, as he would be. The state of man in this world doth represent him subject to the same vanity that all other creatures lie under (Job xvii. 14). This state represents a man as very low and mean because he is subjected to low and mean employments—fit only to converse with other creatures. This present state represents a man in a condition of beggary, dependence, and necessity (Job i. 21). This state represents a man as worn out with solicitude and care for himself, as being tormented with fear, and more to seek than any other creature. This state represents man to be in danger from him that is next him, and of his own kind; for so is the world through sin become degenerate, that one man, as it were, is become a wolf to another. Lastly, the state of man in this life represents his condition otherways than indeed it is; that is, it represents a man the object of the devil's envy, usurpation, and tyranny. He is called the "Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. ii. 2). For the close of this particular I shall add a word or two of application. And—1. If so be there is less of man here and more hereafter, if when we would take a right estimate of man we must consider him in respect of his double estate, hereafter as well as here, then those persons are guilty of the greatest madness and folly that consider themselves only in order to this life; whereas these men have souls to save or to lose, and there is another state that will commence and begin after the expiration of this. 2. My next inference from what hath been said is—that we should not be tempted in this life to do anything to the prejudice of our future state, the state of eternity; but to let things be considered according to the true worth and value, lest they find cause to repent, when it is too late, of the pleasures they took in their unlawful actions. II. The second proposition is—that the state of man in the life to come holds a proportion to his affairs in this life. 1. Let it be understood that I have no intention at all to speak one word to countenance the creature's merit with God, for that I conceive to be incompatible to the condition of the highest angel in glory properly to merit anything at the hand of God. 2. Again, when I say the state of man in the world to come holds a proportion to his affairs in this world, you must not understand it means worldly circumstances of wealth, honour, pleasure, strength, or worldly privileges. Therefore in the affirmative, two things there are belonging to men in this state which are the measures of our happiness in the future state—(1) The internal disposition and mental temper. (2) The illicit acts which follow the temper and are connatural to it. These are our acquisitions, through the grace and assistance of God, which always is to be understood as principal to all good, though it be not always expressed, for all good

is of God. And for this I will give you an account that it must be so. 1. From the nature of the thing, for goodness and happiness are the same thing materially; in nature they are the same, as malignity and misery are the same in nature too. 2. From the judgment of God, and those declarations which He hath made of Himself in the Scriptures, which everywhere declare that He will render to every one according to right (Rom. ii. 6-8). Then let men look well to their mental dispositions, and to their moral actions. This is of a mighty use in religion to understand the true notion of moral actions. From the words of the text I shall observe briefly two things more—First. That worldly prosperity is no certain forerunner of future happiness; for this is a thing heterogenous, and is from distinct and quite other causes. The providence of God governs the world, and the laws of the kingdom of Christ are quite different things. 1. Let no man make himself a slave to that which is no part of his happiness. 2. Let him take his chief care about that which is in certain conjunction with happiness, and that is the noble generous temper of his soul, and the illicit acts of his mind. Secondly. We see from hence that men change terms, circumstances, and conditions, one with another in the world to come. For an account of this—1. Things many times are wrong here, but they will not be wrong always. 2. The present work is to exercise virtue. This is a probation state, a state of trial, and if so, there must be freedom and liberty of action. 3. The final resolution and last stating of things is reserved to another time when no corrupt judge shall sit, but He shall come that shall judge the world in righteousness. The use I will make of this is—1. Therefore, do not envy any one's condition; it is not safe, though glory attend upon it for a while (Psa. xxxvii. 1). 2. Satisfy thyself in thine own condition if it be good and virtuous, for then it is safe. 3. Have a right notion and judgment of the business of time, which is to prepare for the future state. I will conclude this discourse with these four inferences: 1. Then it is folly and madness for men—as frequently they do—to estimate or consider themselves wholly or chiefly by their affairs in this world, and by the good things thereof, such as are power, riches, pleasures. 2. Then it is the great concernment of our souls not at all to admit of any temptation or suggestion to do anything in this life to the prejudice of our state in eternity. 3. Then it is fairly knowable in this state, and by something thereof as a foregoing participation or sign, what our state and condition for sort and kind will be in the world to come. 4. Then faith and patience to go through the world withal, for the day draws on apace for the stating and rectifying of things, the proportioning of recompense and reward to action, and the completing and consummating what is weak and imperfect for the present. He is unreasonably impatient and hasty who will not stay and expect the season of the year and what that brings, but mutters and complains of injury and hard measures because he cannot have harvest in seed-time. (*B. Whichcote.*)

The sin of neglecting to be charitable:—Here are three great aggravations of the rich man's uncharitableness—I. That here was an object presented to him. II. Such an object as would move any one's pity, a man reduced to extreme misery and necessity. III. A little relief would have contented him. 1. That unmercifulness and uncharitableness to the poor is a very great sin. It contains in its very nature two black crimes. (1) Inhumanity; it is an argument of a cruel and savage disposition not to pity those that are in want and misery. (2) Besides the inhumanity of this sin, it is likewise a great impiety toward God. Unmercifulness to the poor hath this fourfold impiety in it—it is a contempt of God; an usurpation upon His right; a slighting of His providence; and a plain demonstration that we do not love God, and that all our pretences to religion are hypocritical and insincere. 2. That it is such a sin, as alone, and without any other guilt, is sufficient to ruin a man for ever. The parable lays the rich man's condemnation upon this, it was the guilt of this sin that tormented him when he was in hell. The Scripture is full of severe threatenings against this sin (Prov. xxi. 13). Our eternal happiness does not so much depend upon the exercise of any one single grace or virtue, as this of charity and mercy. Faith and repentance are more general and fundamental graces, and, as it were, the parents of all the rest: but of all single virtues, the Scripture lays the greatest weight upon this of charity; and if we do truly believe the precepts of the gospel, and the promises and threatenings of it, we cannot but have a principal regard to it. I know how averse men generally are to this duty, which make them so full of excuses and objections against it. 1. They have children to provide for. This is not the case of all, and they whose case it is may do well to consider that it will not be amiss to leave

a blessing as well as an inheritance to their children. 2. They tell us they intend to do something when they die. It shows a great backwardness to the work when we defer it as long as we can. It is one of the worst compliments we can put upon God to give a thing to Him when we can keep it no longer. 3. Others say, they may come to want themselves, and it is prudence to provide against that. To this I answer—(1) I believe that no man ever came the sooner to want for his charity. David hath an express observation to the contrary (Psa. xxxvii. 25). (2) Thou mayest come to want though thou give nothing; in which case thou mayest justly look upon neglect of this duty as one of the causes of thy poverty. (3) After all our care to provide for ourselves, we must trust the providence of God; and a man can in no case so safely commit himself to God as in well-doing. But, if the truth were known, I doubt covetousness lies at the bottom of this objection: however, it is fit it should be answered. (1) I say, that no man that is not prejudiced, either by his education or interest, can think that a creature can merit anything at the hand of God, to whom all that we can possibly do is antecedently due; much less that we can merit so great a reward as that of eternal happiness. (2) Though we deny the merit of good works, yet we firmly believe the necessity of them to eternal life. (*Archbishop Tillotson.*) *Thoughts*:—1. Riches constitute a serious, though not insuperable, obstacle to one's salvation; and poverty, in itself undesirable, is, in a spiritual aspect, less dangerous than riches. 2. Before Him who seeth not as man seeth, the millionaire has no advantage over the mendicant. 3. The soul is the same self-conscious existence immediately after death that it was before; and death ushers some, at once, into a state of conscious enjoyment, and some into a state of conscious misery. 4. They that would not, while probationers, cry to God for mercy, will, in eternity, look in vain for mercy to either God or man. 5. Those whom God designs to save He finds it necessary to chasten, so that life's evil things may wean them from the world and fit them the better to enjoy an eternity of good things. But there are men of the world who have their portion in this life. They prefer enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season, rather than to suffer affliction with the people of God, and hence they in their lifetime receive their good things but are tormented in the world to come. 6. While here, sinners are urged to cross the moral chasm which separates them from saints, for Christ has bridged it; but after death it becomes to them an unbridged, impassable gulf. 7. How deluded are they who suppose that converse with the dead is possible, or that the unseen world can, in that way, be partly unveiled. An inspired book was God's wise and chosen mode of acquainting us with spiritual truths, and he who has this book, yet disregards its teachings, will, in eternity, reap the bitter consequences. (*T. Williston.*) *Dives and Lazarus*:—I. THE FUTURE STATE IS ONE OF RETRIBUTION. II. THE FUTURE STATE IS ONE INTO WHICH MEMORY ENTERS AS A FACTOR OF HAPPINESS OR MISERY. III. IN THE FUTURE STATE INTEREST IS FELT IN THOSE WHO ARE STILL IN THE BODY. IV. GOD BESTOWS UPON US HERE AND NOW ALL THE PRIVILEGES WHICH ARE NEEDFUL TO PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE STATE. Conclusion: 1. The seriousness and solemnity of this earthly probation. 2. The folly of those who use this life simply for their own gratification. 3. The nearness of eternity. 4. The justice of God's requirement of assent to His truth and compliance with His demands. 5. The importance of an immediate acceptance of the gospel, and immediate preparation for judgment. (*J. R. Thomson, M.A.*) *Luxury disregarding suffering*:—*Mdlle. Taglione*, the celebrated dancer, spent her last London season at Her Majesty's Theatre in 1847. She said she would not return to London, being dissatisfied with the admiration which she received. The season was exceptionally brilliant, "though it was said that bread was dear, and the misery of the people great." "One would never suspect it," said the famous dancer, "to see so many splendid equipages, and so many diamonds on the white shoulders of the ladies." *Wanton extravagance*:—"The age cannot be very good," remarked Hannah More, "when the strawberries at Lady Stormonth's breakfast last Saturday morning cost one hundred and fifty pounds." *Too respectable for hell*:—A wealthy merchant of Philadelphia, who would not listen to the gospel message in health, sent for me at his death-bed. I told him, "I have nothing new to tell you. You are a sinner, and here is a Saviour. Do you feel your guilt, and will you take a Saviour?" "No. There must be some better place than hell for a man of my respectability." (*S. H. Tyng, D.D.*) *Riches and perdition*:—Ay, and so it is with the wicked man nowadays. He gets rich, but what is the use of being wealthy if you must be damned? Fool that he is, if he buys a gold coffin, how would that help him? Suppose he is laid out with a bag of gold in each hand, and a pile of it between his

legs, how will that help him? Others seek to get learning, but what is the good of learning if you sink to perdition with it? Take up the learned man's skull, and what is the difference between that and the skull of the merest pauper that scarcely knew his letters? Brown unpalpable powder, they both crumble down into the same elements. To die in a respectable position, what is the use of it? What are a few more plumes on the hearse, or a longer line of mourning coaches? Will these ease the miseries of Tophet? Ah! friends, you have to die. Why not make ready for the inevitable? Oh! if men were wise, they would see that all earth's joys are just like the bubbles which our children blow with soap; they glitter and they shine, and then they are gone, and there is not even a wreck left behind. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The just retribution of selfishness*:—How marvellously just was the retribution of selfishness! with what wonderful precision was the punishment adapted to the sin! During the life of Lazarus, he had laid at the rich man's gate, whence he could behold the pomp, and hear the revelry, that reigned in the gorgeous mansion; and he had asked only for the crumbs that fell from the table, and even these were denied him. But after death the rich man and the beggar are literally made to change places. Dives is placed where he can be a spectator of the happiness of Lazarus; and he desires, but desires in vain, a single drop from those gushing fountains which he saw on the other side of the gulf. You cannot but observe how accurately Dives has become what Lazarus was, and Lazarus what Dives. Lazarus was the beggar, now Dives is. Lazarus saw, though he did not share the abundance of Dives; Dives now sees, but only sees, the abundance of Lazarus. Lazarus asked for crumbs, and Dives asks for a drop. Crumbs were refused, and now even the drop is withheld. Thus the selfish man is made to feel his selfishness through being placed in the precise position of the suppliant, whom his selfishness had caused him to neglect. It may be thus in regard to every other sin, that the wicked will be so circumstanced in futurity, that their sins will be forced on their recollection, and thus conscience be kept for ever on the alert—for ever on the fret. And all—for indeed these are things too dreadful to be dwelt on long—all we can say is, that if the selfish man is to beg in vain from the victims of his selfishness, if the envious is to be forced to gaze on the splendour of those whom he envied, if the seducer is to be made to feel himself for ever the seduced—yea, if punishment is to be so exactly the picture of crime, that a man shall seem to be eternally receiving in his own person the very wrongs that he did to others, so that every stroke beneath which he writhes will appear as the reflected blow of his own violence rebounding on himself, then, indeed, must we be living under a government which will vindicate its righteousness; and he who, in Scriptural language, “sows the wind,” must be a spectacle of justice when compelled to “reap the whirlwind.” (H. Melville, B.D.) *Self-denial necessary to salvation*:—This rich man was no open sinner, but he was simply living to and for self; he enjoyed life, as men say, to the full; he got out of it all the satisfaction he could; self was the centre round which his thoughts, his time, his money revolved; he indulged his taste for fine dress and good food without restraint. In the face, then, of this awful warning, ask yourself the question, Can it be said that my life is marked by self-denial? do I, for Christ's sake, and for that only, do that which is against my natural inclinations, and leave undone that which I should otherwise be inclined to do? or, on the other hand, is it my constant aim and desire to get as much enjoyment for myself as I can in life, if not to the loss and injury of others, yet without any particular thought or care about them? And it will not do to reckon as acts of self-denial instances in which our wills and inclinations have been thwarted, either by others, or by the direct action of God's providence. We must all of us endure a great many crosses and disappointments whether we will or no; no doubt the rich man had occasionally his cares and vexations. These do not leave the stamp of the cross upon our lives, except when they are made to minister to our spiritual good through a willing and loving acquiescence in the will of our Heavenly Father. They may become only the occasion of fresh sin in the shape of fretfulness and discontent. Self-denial is something very different from these. It is the habit of mind which leads us in everything to ask, not how may I best please myself, but, how may I best serve God and aid the souls and bodies of others? Take, for instance, the question of time. We are naturally selfish about our time; we like to spend it in the manner which most gratifies self. Self-denial will set us about asking, Can I, by giving this or that hour which I should otherwise devote to amusement, bring any aid or pleasure to others? Or again, take the question of money. We naturally like to

spend our money on ourselves, or on some object which brings gratification to self. Self-denial will suggest to us to give up something which we should otherwise have liked in order to devote the money to God. And do not let us shrink back as though self-denial were some hard, bitter thing: it brings with it greater pleasure than self-indulgence. And we may begin, if we have never practised it before, by small acts; God accepts even the cup of cold water given for Christ's sake. (*S. W. Skeffington, M.A.*)

Conscious existence after death:—I. THERE IS SUCH A THING AS CONTINUANCE OF EXISTENCE—AND OF CONSCIOUS EXISTENCE—AFTER DEATH. II. THIS CONDITION OF CONSCIOUS EXISTENCE MAY BE ONE OF INTENSE MISERY. III. CONSIDER WHAT IT WAS IN THE RICH MAN'S EARTHLY LIFE WHICH LED TO SUCH CALAMITOUS RESULTS. (*Gordon Calthrop, M.A.*)

The mind made a hell:—A great and rich man in one of our towns in the West was once taken sick and lost his mind. When he recovered from his sickness he was still a deranged man. He seemed never to know his own wife or children. He forgot all his old friends. For seven long years he was in this unhappy state. One day, while sitting in the room where his daughters were, he sprang from his chair and cried out in great joy, "Thank God I am out at last!" I cannot describe the scene of that hour. He embraced and kissed his daughters. He wept with joy on the bosom of his wife, and acted as if he had not seen them for many years. At last he said to them, "For seven long years I have been in a burning hell. It was a horrible cavern of lakes and rocks and mountains of fire. I saw millions there, but could find no friend. I was ever burning, yet never consumed; ever dying, yet never dead. No light of the sun shined there, and no smile of God was seen. I remembered there every sinful thing I had done, and was tormented in my soul. I thought of the sufferings and death of that blessed Saviour, and how I had treated Him. There was no rest to my soul day nor night. I had no hope there. Yet I wandered in madness to find some way of escape. At last, as I stood on the top of a high rock blazing with heat, I saw in the distance a little opening like the light of the sky. I jumped headlong down, and with all my powers made my way towards it. At last I climbed up to it, and worked and struggled through; and, blessed be God, here I am again, with my beloved wife and children." Now, my friends, suppose there is no such place as hell. Suppose some one should be so foolish as to hope that there is no such place. Yet remember, that if God can make a man's own mind such a hell as this while he is yet in this world, He can find a still more fearful hell for him in the world to come. (*Bishop Meade.*)

Where is hell?—"Where is hell?" was the question once asked by a scoffer. Brief but telling was the reply, "Anywhere outside of heaven." (*Biblical Museum.*)

No relief possible in hell:—It is an overpowering reflection! but we have sometimes emboldened ourselves to inquire what would bring relief and support to the lost in hell? What could soften the keenness of that flame? And two considerations have raised themselves in our mind as those which, could they be indulged, might yield the assuagement that we had ventured to suppose. 1. The first consideration we should demand is, that the sufferer of the doom might feel that it was inevitable. The idea of fate sets us free from the sense of blame. 2. The second consideration which might subdue the fierceness of infernal agonies, would be that they are undeserved. It would be joy to the prisoners, could they only reflect, "We are the victims of arbitrary justice!" Spirit has not, however, passed into such regions with either of these consolations, nor found them there! Spirit never, in fearful soliloquy, spake: "Necessity wrought this chain, and malignity locked it!" Spirit never exclaimed: "Despite of myself, I was dragged hither, and here in violation of all truth and equity I am chained!" . . . It is the converse of these thoughts that deepens the outer darkness, that accumulates the horrors of the pit. "It need not have been." What a self-upbraiding! "Justice had none other recourse." What a self-condemnation! "Why would ye die?" is the rebuke for ever in their ear! "We indeed justly," is the confession for ever on the tongue! (*R. W. Hamilton.*)

Final impenitence:—It is something—it is a step towards higher reaches of faith, to be well assured of the existence and reality of this invisible realm, in which the spirits of the departed energize (for surely such is the plain teaching of the parable) after they are severed from the body, and go through all the processes of consciousness, thought, and feeling. It is something to believe, or rather something to realize the truth, that there is indeed a world, more thickly peopled with the spirits of the departed than this earth is with the bodies of the living; and that among the inhabitants of this world there are movements of mind, actings of the will, the memory, the understanding, the affections: on the one hand, a spiritual intercommunion with Christ and the

members of Christ, fetching deepest peace into the soul; on the other, all the agitations of fear, remorse, compunction, and despair. The realm is to us a shrouded realm, but surely not the less real because we cannot apprehend it with our senses. Let us now consider briefly what the text implies of the circumstances, sentiments, and character of the rich worldling, who is represented as undergoing torments. I. As to his circumstances. It is sufficiently indicated that he was a Jew by descent. He calls Abraham father, and Abraham, though separated from him by a great gulf, though unable to render him assistance, or comply with his request, does not refuse to recognize him. "Abraham said unto him, Son, remember." What! a son of Abraham, and yet an outcast! Circumcised the eighth day, and yet a reprobate! A child of God's covenant, and yet a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction! II. From the position and circumstances of this rich worldling, we next proceed to consider his sentiments. He is represented as imploring Abraham to save his five brethren from the doom in which he had irretrievably involved himself, by sending them an unearthly warning of the reality of a future state of existence, and of its horrors for the ungodly. It does not seem that every spark of natural affection, exile from God and from happiness though he be, is extinguished in this man's breast. III. Let me mention a third point, still more favourable to his salvation than the two preceding, but still quite insufficient to secure it: this is, that so far as appears from the narrative, he had not been guilty of any crime, of any gross or palpable offence whatever. He had not hurled blasphemous defiance against the Most High. My brethren, these remarks may serve to confute the fatal error of those in whose estimation the only real sins in existence are sins of commission. How many are there who congratulate themselves on the many wrong things which they have never done. What, then, was the sin, a wilful and impenitent continuance in which ensured the eternal loss of this worldling's soul? The sin, in its root (for every sin has a root, a state of mind out of which it springs and to which it is referable), was unbelief. But I must hasten on to point out the particular development of unbelief with which this narrative presents us. If a man have no realizing apprehension of a future state, still more if he entertain doubts respecting some revealed particulars of that state, the natural consequence, the practical operation of such views, will be a living for this world. All beyond the grave is, in such a man's apprehensions, hazy, indistinct, uncertain. His aim was to enjoy himself, to lead a life of ease and self-indulgence. He secluded himself, as much as he could, from annoying sights and distressing sounds. Whenever, accidentally, misery or want met his eye, he turned away as from an object distressing to contemplate. And hence, probably more than from any settled hardness of heart, sprang his culminating offence, his entire lack of service to God's poor. Behold then, brethren, in these words, the origin and development of that sin which, cherished to the end of his days, issued in the ruin of his soul—practical unbelief; a living unto self and for this world; an entire forgetfulness of the wants of others. Nothing flagrant, nothing vicious, nothing openly immoral, but quite enough to conduct him to that awful realm where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. My brethren, our subject admits of, or rather it challenges, a close application to our own circumstances, and that in regard both of the times on which we are fallen, and of the place in which our lot is cast. 1. A subtle disbelief of the spiritual world in general, and of a future state of existence (at least on the side of eternal punishment), is fast insinuating itself into the minds of the respectable, the educated, and thoughtful classes. Again, there is a growing, and even avowed, disbelief among the most earnest and thoughtful men of the day on the subject of eternal punishment. And here I would remark that disbelief of the *future* world, in any of its aspects, is very closely connected with disbelief of the *unseen* world which is at present around us. I shall suppose, then, the case of a man who, while orthodox in all the main articles of his religious belief, and nominally a member of the Church, has allowed his faith in things unseen and eternal to be secretly sapped. In that he resembles Dives. 2. The second point to which I shall call your attention, in applying to our own consciences the warning of the text, is the atmosphere of religious privilege, which my academical hearers specially, but those residing in the city also in good measure, habitually inhale. Yet who does not know that, where no corresponding zeal and spirituality exist in the heart, this frequency of religious ordinance and privilege acts rather as a soporific than as a stimulant, makes eternal things more hazy and less substantial than they were, when worship more rarely recurred? 3. Now, our Lord, in the parable before us, represents this development of resources as having a

dangerous tendency, as contributing something material to strengthen the impenitence of the natural heart. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *Natural affection distinguished from the faith and love of the gospel.*—We desire to show what light the parable throws on the obligation and the motives of Christian benevolence: First, by setting before us, in the rich man, a character in which that grace is deficient; and, secondly, by setting before us, in Lazarus, a fitting object for its exercise. I. We find in the rich man a character devoid of Christian benevolence, or the Christian principle of benevolence; and this defect rendered all his goodness of any other sort unavailing. For that he was good in some points and in a certain sense we gather from the conclusion of the parable. And why does he select his brothers alone, from the victims of his example? It must be—it can only be—from the relents of fraternal tenderness. The earnestness of his prayer, that they might not “also come to the place of torment,” marks the still remaining sensitiveness of his natural sensibilities, and the strength of his natural affection. In the first place—how little is that sensibility and natural affection to be depended upon, which even the condemned in the place of torment may feel! What! will you build your hope of heaven on a virtue which you may share in common with the accursed inmates and inhabitants of hell? Will you plume and pride yourselves on your kindly feelings, or your goodness of heart, as a security that all is well, and that ultimately, somehow or other, you cannot but be happy, when you see much of that kindliness of feeling, and what you call goodness of heart, in the regions of everlasting woe? Learn, then, ye who are living in friendship with the world, yet still in conscious enmity against God—loving perhaps your brother, according to the flesh, with much tenderness of human affection, yet untaught to love your God with all your heart, and to love your neighbour for His sake—learn to estimate the real worth, or rather worthlessness, of your much-vaunted goodness of heart. It is not a goodness that will carry you to heaven. But, in the second place, we must put the case more strongly still. We must observe that this natural sensibility and affection, when the views are thus enlarged by taking in eternity as well as time, may become itself the very source of misery and torment. It is evidently so represented in the case of this rich man. His solicitude about his brothers very much increased his own sufferings, and aggravated the agony of his own hopeless condemnation. This is a very striking and appalling view to take of the misery awarded to the impenitent and unbelieving. It shows how the very best, the most amiable and generous, feelings of the unrenewed and unregenerated soul, may become themselves the means and occasions of its sorer punishment. Experience even here on earth shows, that affection makes us partakers of the sufferings as well as the joys of our fellow-creatures and friends. His love to his brothers on earth superseded his love to his Father in heaven. And fitly therefore now, that very love is made to minister the punishment due to him for his breach of the first and great commandment. He loved his brethren independently of God. He made them partakers of his pleasures; and partakers also of his sin. Have you no fear, I ask—that in the very attachment you are now forming—in the very affection you are now indulging—in the friendship and love which every day is rendering more intense, as you lavish on its object all proofs and tokens of tenderest regard—you may be but treasuring up the very instruments of wrath against the day of wrath? Cultivate the charities of social and domestic life; but be sure that you cultivate them as in the sight of God, and in the full and steady prospect of eternity. II. We turn now to the other party in this scene, the other figure in this picture. We consider the beggar, and his claim to sympathy and relief. It is a claim which the benevolence of mere natural feeling overlooked, but which the benevolence of Christian principle insists upon having regarded. It is in this light, accordingly, that the Christian considers his fellow-men; as being either actually partakers, or capable of yet becoming partakers, of the grace and the glory of God. This is the ground of the esteem in which he holds them—this the measure of the value he assigns to them. How different is this esteem of men, on account of the worth and value of their souls, from the careless and casual sympathy of mere natural compassion, and how vastly more effectual as a motive of benevolence? The man of natural kindness and sensibility, touched with the sight of woe, and moved to pity and to tears, may utter the voice of tenderness, and stretch forth the hand of charity. But the object of his compassion has no great importance or value in his eyes. All the interest he takes in him is simply on account of his present suffering. But now, if you were to view that individual in the light in which Christianity

represents him ; as one of those whom the Father willeth to save, and for whose souls He gave His own Son to die ; how would the intensity of your concern in Him be deepened, and how would your sense of obligation to Him be enhanced ! Again, how different is this Christian view of the preciousness of every human being, from the view which mere infidel philanthropy takes ! On the infidel hypothesis—what at the best, in the eye of enlightened benevolence, is the race of man ? A succession of insects—creatures of a day, fluttering their few hours of shade and sunshine, and then sinking into endless night. Is it worth while to fret and toil much for such a generation ? It is the gospel alone that shows the real value of man—of individual man—as having a spirit that will never die ; and enforces the regard due to him from his fellow-men on the ground of his being the object of the regard of their common God. See, then, that you love him as God loves him. God is kind to the evil and to the unthankful, because He would have them to be saved. Be you kind to them also ; and with the same view. Abound towards them in all good works. Melt their hearts, though hard and sullen as lead, by heaping your benefits as coals of fire upon their heads. (*Dr. Candlish.*)

The rich man's prayer.—I. A good act at a wrong time. II. A good prayer for a wrong purpose. III. A good effort with no effect. (*The Preacher's Analyst.*)

SON, REMEMBER.—The retributive power of memory.—Those who believe in the immortality of the soul must also believe in the immortality of its faculties—reason, memory, conscience. I. WHAT, THEN, IS MEMORY ? LET US FIRST DEFINE THE FACULTY. Every one is aware of the fact that the knowledge which we have once acquired, the things we have seen and done, the experiences that we have had, though not always present to the mind, are nevertheless so retained, that the same things may be, and often are, recalled to our mental notice. Every one is fully conscious of such a fact in his own history. We designate this fact by the term memory. Memory is, therefore, the mind's power of preserving and knowing its own past history. It is the same in both worlds. We are, moreover, so constructed, that we cannot discredit the knowledge given by memory. I am as certain of what I distinctly remember, as I can be of anything. The absolute loss of memory would destroy the whole framework of man's mental existence, by limiting his intellectual life to the impressions of the passing moments. II. LET ME SAY THAT MEMORY OPERATES IN OBEDIENCE TO ESTABLISHED AND PERMANENT LAWS. By them we conduct the process of memory. We do it without labour, yea, by necessity, having no power not to do it. Thus we think of ourselves as intelligent, conscious, voluntary, in both worlds, in both exercising memory according to fixed laws, some of which at least rule our present life. III. I WISH TO CALL YOUR ATTENTION TO THE EXTENT OF ITS RETENTIVE AND REPRODUCTIVE POWER. In the amazing greatness of this power, as we observe it in time, we shall perhaps find the condition of at least conjecturing what it will be in eternity. It was the opinion of Lord Bacon that nothing in one's antecedent history is ever irrecoverably forgotten. Coleridge held the same view. We know, as a matter of positive experience, that the prominent and leading facts of life past are safely retained in the bosom of memory. The many instances of remarkable memory that we gather from history are an instructive commentary upon the greatness of this power. Themistocles, we are told, could call by their names the twenty thousand citizens of Athens. It is said of Cyrus, that he could repeat the name of every soldier in his army. There are also many striking and peculiar cases of resuscitated knowledge, in which apparently extinct memories are suddenly restored. Numerous instances of quickened memory, under the influence of physical causes, show what the mind may do under special and extraordinary exaltations of its activity. Persons on the brink of death by drowning are said to have unusually vivid visions of the past. If such be memory here, in this nascent state of our being—this mere infancy of our intellectual life—what may it not be, and what may it not do, when, with our other faculties, freed from a body of flesh and blood, it shall soar in progressive expansion and enlargement through the ages of a coming eternity ? IV. WHAT IS TO BE THE IMPRESSION OF MEMORY UPON OUR HAPPINESS OR MISERY IN THE FUTURE WORLD ? That so great a power will make an impression upon the soul, pleasant or painful, according to the character of the facts embraced in the exercise, is an inference derivable not only from the greatness of the power, but equally from the ample materials of our present experience. (*S. T. Spear, D.D.*)

The memory of the lost.—I. THERE IS SATISFACTORY EVIDENCE THAT THE MEMORY OF EARTHLY SCENES WILL BE RETAINED IN ETERNITY. This is implied in the very nature of retribution. The soul is to be punished for the deeds done in the body ; and unless it remember

those deeds, how can it know for what it is punished? The nature of retribution, and the end of God's government in it, require that the soul should remember. Moreover, the philosophy of the mind itself teaches the same thing. Go to the place of your birth, and look at the objects that were familiar to you in early days, and the scenes and events of childhood, which have been gone from you for years, will come thronging up from the storehouse of memory, and you will almost think yourself a child again. The past is not for ever gone, and at the appropriate signal it can all be summoned before us. And is there any evidence that death will break this chain of memory? II. NOT ONLY WILL THE MEMORY EXIST IN THE FUTURE WORLD, BUT IT WILL PROBABLY POSSESS FAR GREATER ACTIVITY AND ENERGY THAN IN THE PRESENT LIFE, AND THUS BE ENABLED TO RECALL THE PAST WITH A DISTINCTNESS AND VIVIDNESS NOW WHOLLY UNKNOWN. That our knowing faculty will be vastly increased is expressly asserted in the Word of God. Why not, then, the remembering faculty, which is so intimately associated with it? III. WHAT SUBJECTS WILL PROBABLY BE MOST PROMINENT IN THE REFLECTIONS OF THE LOST SOUL. 1. They will remember the gifts of Providence, for which they requited their Maker with ingratitude and rebellion. 2. They will doubtless remember the spiritual privileges which they failed to improve. 3. Sinners will remember in eternity the evil influence which they exerted while on earth, and all the fatal consequences of it. (*D. B. Coe.*) *Son, remember:—*Like Fear, like Hope, like Love, like Conscience, Memory has a place, a large place, in the heart, in the life, and therefore in the gospel. Whose to-day is not the product of a number of yesterdays? Whose present is not the very fruit and harvest of his past? We should expect that this thing—call it faculty, gift, talent, inflection, or what you will—would have a place, and it has a large place, in Revelation; for Revelation is nothing else than God speaking to man as he is, and calling him to something of which he has in him already the capability and the germ. God Himself ascribes to Himself memory; speaks of remembering, and remembering not; speaks of remembering man's sorrows and His own mercy; speaks of that other faculty, the reverse of memory, the power of forgetting, which is a more Divine faculty still, when it is exercised, as in the mind and heart of God, in so putting away a man's sins that He remembers them no more. And God bids man exercise memory; bids him remember his own sins, and be ashamed, bids him remember God's commandments, and set himself to obey; bids him remember his last end, and make preparation: bids him remember death, judgment, and eternity, and the great gulf fixed. 1. Remember, we will say first, God's dealings with thee. O, it is not philosophy, it is mere commonplace vulgar infidelity, which makes any of us doubt whether God has been about our path and about our journey in the time past of our life. If we have not seen Him, it is the worse for us. 2. Remember the opportunities, seized or neglected, with which God in the past has furnished and endowed you. Who can think of his school-days, and not reproach himself bitterly with neglects, now irreparable, of instructions and influences which might have altered the very complexion of his life? Who can remember his friends, and not mourn over evil done and good left undone? And when we pass from these outward gifts to such as are altogether spiritual; when we think of the Word of God, and His House, and His Ministry, and His Sacraments; then, there is a solemnity, an awfulness, even as it is heard in this life, in the charge, "Son, remember." 3. Remember the blessings God has showered upon thee. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Memory in another world:—*I. In another state, MEMORY WILL BE SO WIDENED AS TO TAKE IN THE WHOLE LIFE. We believe that the contents of the intellectual nature, the capacities of that nature also, are all increased by the fact of having done with earth and having left the body behind. But whether saved or lost—he that dies is greater than when yet living; and all his powers are intensified and strengthened by that awful experience of death, and by what it brings with it. Memory partakes in the common quickening. There are not wanting analogies and experiences in our present life to let us see that, in fact, when we talk about forgetting we ought to mean nothing more than the temporary cessation of conscious remembrance. Everything which you do leaves its effect with you for ever, just as long-forgotten meals are in your blood and bones to-day. Every act that a man performs is there. It has printed itself upon his soul, it has become a part of himself: and though, like a newly painted picture, after a little while the colours go in, why is that? Only because they have entered into the very fibre of the canvas, and have left the surface because they are incorporated with the substance, and they want but a touch of varnish to flash out again! As the developing solution

brings out the image on the photographic plate, so the mind has the strange power, by fixing the attention, as we say (a short word which means a long, mysterious thing) upon that past that is half remembered and half forgotten, of bringing it into clear consciousness and perfect recollection. The fragmentary remembrances which we have now, lift themselves above the ocean of forgetfulness like islands in some Archipelago, the summits of sister hills, though separated by the estranging sea that covers their converging sides and the valleys where their roots unite. The solid land is there, though hidden. Drain off the sea, and there will be no more isolated peaks, but continuous land. In this life we have but the island memories heaving themselves into sight, but in the next "the Lord" shall "cause the sea to go back" by the breath of His mouth, and the channels of the great deep of a human heart's experiences and actions shall be laid bare. "There shall be no more sea"; but the solid land of a whole life will appear when God says, "Son, remember!" So much, then, for my first consideration—namely, that memory in a future state will comprehend the whole of life. II. Another thing is, that MEMORY IN A FUTURE STATE WILL PROBABLY BE SO RAPID AS TO EMBRACE ALL THE PAST LIFE AT ONCE. We do not know, we have no conception of it, the extent to which our thinking, and feeling, and remembrance, are made tardy by the slow vehicle of this bodily organization in which the soul rides. As on the little retina of an eye there can be painted on a scale inconceivably minute, every tree and mountain-top in the whole wide panorama, so, in an instant, one may run through almost a whole lifetime of mental acts. Ah, brethren, we know nothing yet about the rapidity with which we may gather before us a whole series of events; so that although we have to pass from one to another, the succession may be so swift, as to produce in our own minds the effect of all being co-existent and simultaneous. As the child, flashing about him a bit of burning stick, may seem to make a circle of flame, because the flame-point moves so quickly, so memory, though it does go from point to point, and dwells for some inconceivably minute instant on each part of the remembrance, may yet be gifted with such lightning speed, with such rapidity and awful quickness of glance, as that to the man himself the effect shall be that his whole life is spread out there before him in one instant, and that he, Godlike, sees the end and the beginning side by side. Yes; from the mountain of eternity we shall look down, and behold the whole plain spread before us. Once more: it seems as if, in another world, memory would not only contain the whole life, and the whole life simultaneously; but would perpetually attend or haunt us. III. A CONSTANT REMEMBRANCE. It does not lie in our power even in this world, to decide very much whether we shall remember or forget. There are memories that *will* start up before us, whether we are willing or not. Like the leprosy in the Israelite's house, the foul spot works its way out through all the plaster and the paint; and the house is foul because it is there. I remember an old castle where they tell us of foul murder committed in a vaulted chamber with a narrow window, by torchlight one night; and there, they say, there are the streaks and stains of blood on the black oak floor; and they have planed, and scrubbed, and planed again, and thought they were gone—but there they always are, and continually up comes the dull, reddish-black stain, as if oozing itself out through the boards to witness to the bloody crime again! The superstitious fable is a type of the way in which a foul thing, a sinful and bitter memory—gets engrained into a man's heart. He tries to banish it, and gets rid of it for a while. He goes back again, and the spots are there, and will be there for ever; and the only way to get rid of them is to destroy the soul in which they are. Memory is not all within the power of the will on earth; and probably, memory in another world is still more involuntary and still more constant. A memory, brethren, that *will* have its own way; what a field for sorrow and lamentation that is, when God says at last, "Now go—go apart; take thy life with thee; read it over; see what thou hast done with it!" One old Roman tyrant had a punishment in which he bound the dead body of the murdered to the living body of the murderer, and left them there scaffolded. And when that voice comes, "Son, remember!" to the living soul of the godless, unbelieving, impenitent man, there is bound to him the murdered past, the dead past, his own life; and, in Milton's awful and profound words,

"Which way I fly is hell—myself am hell!"

There is only one other modification of this awful faculty that I would remind you of; and that is—IV. That in a future life MEMORY WILL BE ASSOCIATED WITH A

PERFECTLY ACCURATE KNOWLEDGE OF THE CONSEQUENCES, AND A PERFECTLY SENSITIVE CONSCIENCE AS TO THE CRIMINALITY OF THE PAST. You will have cause and consequence put down before you, meeting each other at last. There will be no room then to say, "I wonder how such and such a thing will work out," "I wonder how such a thing can have come upon me"; but every one will have his whole life to look back upon, and will see the childish sin that was the parent of the full-grown vice, and the everlasting sorrow that came out of that little and apparently transitory root. The conscience, which here becomes hardened by contact with sin, and enfeebled because unheeded, will then be restored to its early sensitiveness and power, as if the labourer's horny palm were to be endowed again with the softness of the infant's little hand. It is not difficult to see how that is an instrument of torture. It is more difficult to see how such a memory can be a source of gladness, and yet it can. Calvary is on this side, and that is enough! Certainly it is one of the most blessed things about "the faith that is in Christ Jesus," that it makes a man remember his own sinfulness with penitence, not with pain—that it makes the memory of past transgressions full of solemn joy, because the memory of past transgressions but brings to mind the depth and rushing fulness of that river of love which has swept them all away as far as the east is from the west. (*A. MacLaren, D.D.*)

The present life as related to the future.—Let us notice some particulars in which we see the operation of this principle. What are the "good things," which Dives receives here, for which he must be "tormented" hereafter? and what are the "evil things," which Lazarus receives in this world, for which he will be "comforted" in the world to come? 1. In the first place, the worldly man derives a more intense physical enjoyment from this world's goods than does the child of God. He possesses more of them, and gives himself up to them without self-restraint. Not many rich and not many noble are called. In the past history of mankind the great possessions and the great incomes, as a general rule, have not been in the hands of humble and penitent men. In the great centres of trade and commerce—in Venice, Amsterdam, Paris, London—it is the world, and not the people of God, who have had the purse, and have borne what is put therein. So far as this merely physical existence is concerned, the wicked man has the advantage. 2. In the second place, the worldly man derives more enjoyment from sin, and suffers less from it, in this life, than does the child of God. The really renewed man cannot enjoy sin. His sin is a sorrow, a constant sorrow, to him. He feels its pressure and burden all his days, and cries, "O wretched man, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And not only does the natural man enjoy sin, but, in this life, he is much less troubled than is the spiritual man with reflections and self-reproaches on account of sin. This is another of the "good things" which Dives receives, for which he must be "tormented"; and this is another of the "evil things" which Lazarus receives, for which he must be "comforted." 1. In view of this subject, as thus discussed, we remark, in the first place, that no man can have his "good things"—in other words, his chief pleasure—in both worlds. There is no alchemy that can amalgamate substances that refuse to mix. No man has ever yet succeeded, no man ever will succeed, in securing both the pleasures of sin and the pleasures of holiness—in living the life of Dives, and then going to the bosom of Abraham. 2. And this leads to the second remark, that every man must make his choice whether he will have his "good things" now, or hereafter. Every man is making his choice. The heart is now set either upon God, or upon the world. 3. Hence we remark, in the third place, that it is the duty and the wisdom of every man to let this world go, and seek his "good things" hereafter. Our Lord commands every man to sit down like the steward in the parable, and make an estimate. He enjoins it upon every man to reckon up the advantages upon each side, and see for himself which is superior. (*W. G. T. Shedd, D.D.*)

Memory as an element in future retribution.—Memory is that power of the soul by which it retains the knowledge acquired by the perceptions and consciousness of the past. Its operations are altogether inscrutable by us, and we can give no other account concerning them than this: that God has so made us that our minds have this particular power. Memory is in every man the infallible autobiographer of the soul, and on its pages, however much they may be now concealed from view, are recorded every thought and feeling, every word and action, everything experienced and everything perceived, during the course of life. As in our meteorological stations, by a delicate instrument, with which some of you may be acquainted, the strength and direction of the wind are by the wind itself registered without intermission from hour to hour, so on the tablets of memory the whole history

of the soul is by the soul itself recorded with the most minute and unerring exactness. Not indeed that all that is at every moment consciously present to the mind. There is such a thing as forgetfulness, but over against that we must place the fact that things forgotten at one time are remembered at another, so that we may fairly conclude that nothing is ever completely lost by the soul. Memory furnishes the material on which conscience shall pronounce, and conscience gives to memory the sting which turns it into remorse. This is evident, even in the present life. Our own experience testifies thereto; and though a poet has sung in strains of beauty of the Pleasures of Memory, there are few of us who could not tell a thrilling tale of its agonies as well. But in the case of the world to come, over and above these things which make memory even here a scourge to the sinner, there are three considerations which are calculated to intensify its power of torment. 1. Memory shall there recall the events of time as seen in the perspective of eternity. In the crowd and hurry of the present, things bulk before us disproportionately. We need to be at a distance from them before we can estimate them rightly. That is one reason why the past is seen always more correctly when it is past, than it was when it was present; and why it is, that in taking a review of anything, we observe more clearly where we have failed, or in what we have been to blame, than we did at the time when we were engaged in it. You may despise now the blessings which you enjoy, but when they have gone from you to return nevermore, you shall see them in their proper brightness, and upbraid yourselves for your madness in letting them go unimproved. 2. But another thing calculated to intensify the power of memory as an instrument in the retribution of the future life, is the fact that there it shall be quickened in its exercise, and we shall not be able to forget anything. Things of which we are now oblivious shall there be brought back with lurid distinctness to our remembrance, and actions long buried beneath the sands of time shall, like the ruins of Pompeii, be dug up again into the light, and stand before us as they were at first. Among ancient manuscripts which modern research has brought to light, there are some, called by learned men palimpsests, in which it has been discovered that what was originally a gospel or an epistle, or other book of Holy Scripture, had been written over by a mediæval scribe with the effusions of a profane poet; but now, by the application of some chemical substance, the original sacred record has been produced, and is used as an authority in settling the reading of disputed passages. So the pages of memory are palimpsests. 3. Another thing which will intensify the power of memory as an element in future retribution is the fact that, in the case of the lost, conscience shall be rectified and give just utterances regarding the events reviewed. As he now is, the sinner can look back with mirth on some hour of frantic dissipation, or some deed of shame; but then conscience will compel him to contemplate such things with the agony of remorse. As he now is, he can congratulate himself on having done a clever thing when he has overreached his neighbour; but then he will lose sight of the cleverness of the act in the guilt by which it was characterized. As he now is, he can gloss over his excesses by speaking of himself, in the specious and entirely deceptive phraseology of the world, as "fast," or "a little wild," or "sowing his wild oats," or the like; but then conscience will insist on calling things by their right names, and each act of wickedness will stand out before him as rebellion against God. Thus, with conscience rectified and memory quickened, it is not difficult to account for the agony of the lost, while at the same time the retributive consequences of sin in the future life are seen to be not the effects of some arbitrary and capricious sentence, but the natural and necessary results of violating the law which was written at first upon our moral constitution. APPLICATION: 1. Look at these things in their bearing on the privileges which at present we so lightly esteem. Every blessing disregarded now will there be recalled by memory, and transformed by conscience into an upbraiding reproof and a horrible tormentor. 2. Again, let us apply the principles which have been before our minds this morning to the opportunities of doing good to others which we have allowed to go by us unimproved. Behold here, how the conscience of this man gives sting to his memory as he recalls the resources which were at his command, and sees how much he might have done with them for the promotion of the welfare and happiness of his fellow-men. Never before had he seen his responsibility for them as he sees it now, and now that he does see it in its true light, he is not able to act according to its directions, so that the perception of it only magnifies and intensifies his agony. But is there no voice of warning in all this to us? (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Reflections of sinners in hell:—*

I. WE HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THE DAMNED WILL HAVE REFLECTIONS. 1.

Their natural powers and faculties will not only be continued, but vastly strengthened and enlarged. 2. They will not meet with the same obstructions to mental exercises that they meet with here in their present state of probation. Here their cares, their troubles, their employments and various amusements, dissipate their thoughts and obstruct reflection. But these such objects will be entirely removed from their reach and pursuit. 3. God will continually exhibit before their view such things as will excite the most painful reflections and anticipations. He will set their sins in order before them, in their nature, magnitude, and peculiar aggravations, so that they cannot obliterate them from their minds. He will exhibit all his great, amiable, and terrible attributes of power, holiness, justice, and sovereignty before them, and give them a constant and realizing sense of His awful presence and displeasure. He will give them no rest and no hope. Let us now—

II. TAKE A SERIOUS VIEW OF THEIR BITTER REFLECTIONS IN THE REGIONS OF DESPAIR. 1. They will realize what they are. Rational and immortal beings, which can never cease to exist nor to suffer. 2. They will realize where they are. In hell. 3. The damned will reflect whence they came to that place of torment. They will reflect upon the land of light and the precious advantages they there enjoyed, before they were confined to the regions of darkness. 4. They will reflect upon all that was done for them, to prevent them from falling into the pit of perdition. 5. They will realize, that they destroyed themselves, which will be a source of bitter and perpetual reflections. 6. They will reflect upon what they had done, not only to destroy themselves, but others. 7. They will reflect upon what good they might have done, while they lived in the world. 8. It will pain them to think how they once despised and reproached godliness, and all who lived holy and godly lives. 9. Their clear view of the happiness of heaven will be a source of tormenting reflections. 10. Finally, they will reflect not only upon what they have been, and might have been, but upon what they are, and always will be. They will reflect that being filthy, they shall be filthy still; that being unholy, they shall be unholy still; and that being miserable, they shall be miserable still. Application: 1. If the state of the damned has been properly described, then it is of great importance that ministers should preach plainly upon the subject, and if possible, make their hearers realize the danger of going to hell. 2. If the miseries of the damned be such as have been described, then it deeply concerns sinners to take heed how they hear the gospel. 3. If the miseries of the damned be such as have been described, then we see why the Scripture represents this world as so dangerous to sinners. 4. If the miseries of the damned arise from bitter reflections, then all sinners, in their present state, are fit for destruction. They have just such views, and feelings, and reflections in kind, as the damned have. 5. If the miseries of the damned, and the character of sinners, be such as have been described, then there is reason to fear that some sinners are very near to the pit of perdition. They are in the broad road which has led many such persons as they are to the place where there is no light, and no hope. The symptoms of eternal death are upon them, though they know it not. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*)

*The influence of memory increasing the misery of the lost:—*What, speaking of a lost soul, will he remember in another world? I. THE POSSESSIONS HE HAD IN THIS: Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted; and thou art tormented." Yes, all shall be recollected: the gains in business that this lost soul in perdition secured when he was an inhabitant of our world; his patrimonial possessions, his accumulations of wealth, his splendid mansions, his gay equipage, his sumptuous living, his retinue of servants, everything that constituted his gaiety and his grandeur, and all his pomp and circumstance. But what advantage will it be to have a voice perpetually saying to him throughout eternity, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things"? Oh, the sting of that past tense—"thou hadst"! II. LOST SOULS WILL REMEMBER THEIR WORLDLY PLEASURES. The poet has said, and every man's experience sustains the propriety and truth of the expression, "Of joys departed never to return, oh how painful the remembrance." Think of the votary of this world's pleasure, think of the man of fashion, think of the woman given up to little else than earthly delights, suddenly arrested in their career, and carried into eternity, away from all their pleasures, to a land where no sounds of mirth, no voice of song, no note of music, ever break upon the ear. III. THE LOST SOUL WILL REMEMBER IN ETERNITY HIS SINS. The great multitude forget theirs now as soon as they are committed; and any man that sets himself down to the task of counting the number of his transgressions, will find he

is engaged in as hopeless a work as numbering the stars that burst on his view on a clear winter's night. The lurid flashes of perdition will throw light on this subject, and for ever settle the question, that sin is an infinite evil; and then all excuses will be silenced. IV. THE LOST SOUL WILL RECOLLECT IN ETERNITY ITS MEANS OF GRACE, ITS OPPORTUNITIES OF SALVATION, ITS ADVANTAGES FOR OBTAINING ETERNAL LIFE. V. THE LOST SOUL IN ETERNITY, WILL REMEMBER ITS IMPRESSIONS, CONVICTIONS, PURPOSES, AND RESOLUTIONS, ON EARTH. Sometimes it is painful to you now to think of this, and you are ready to say, "Oh, that I had never heard that sermon; oh, that I had never had those impressions; oh, that those convictions had never taken hold of my heart! I cannot enjoy my sins as I once did; I am half spoiled for the world, though I am not a member of the Church." Yes, and you know, that often the scene of festivity, in which others experience no interruption, is marred for you. Then think, young man, think what will be the case in eternity, when a voice shall say, "Son, remember thy impressions; remember thy convictions." (*J. A. James.*)

The eternity of memory:—Death destroys neither the soul's capacities nor energies. Memory is eternal; it therefore behoves us to ask with what we are storing it. 1. Consciousness lies at the foundation of all responsible life, and soon merges into the fuller day of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is the knowledge which self attains when it says "I," and recognizes that "I" is distinct from anything else in the universe; and involves three things—the knowledge of "myself," of something not "myself," and of the relations arising between what is "myself" and what is not "myself." 2. In order to make these relations explicit, we need a faculty to tell us that *we* existed yesterday, and what other faculty is this but memory? But unless we make memory to subsist in two parts, as a capacity to retain and an energy to recall, we shall not explain its workings, or be able to see in what way it is deathless. 3. The principles by which active memory works among the treasures of passive memory to recall things new and old, are called the primary and the secondary laws of association. Ideas and actions have relation to time, and connect with each other like links in a chain. Sometimes we perceive the connection between the ideas which memory recalls, at other times we do not; and yet there is some connection, just as when a row of balls is struck at one end, the force is transmitted through them, and the ball at the other end takes up the motion and the journey of the impinging ball. 4. But if memory is thus complete and deathless—as without doubt it is—some one may ask, "How is it possible for any to go from an imperfect life, with its imperishable record, and derive any pleasure from its contemplation?" I answer: "In the life of heaven love will predominate, and by the laws of association it will bring forth from the storehouse only such reminiscences as are pure and holy." Conclusion: In view of all this, how wise and necessary for our future happiness to fill the present life and its passing moments with kind words, upright thoughts, and useful actions. And, on the other hand, will not the memory of an evil life, if unchecked by grace and unrestrained by holy love, constitute a source of keenest misery? Will not a deathless memory work upon the quickened conscience, and gnaw like a worm that never dieth, or burn like a fire that is never quenched? (*L. O. Thompson.*)

Materials for a future judgment in the constitution of the human mind:—The argument from memory for a future judgment is powerful, because, on every excursion of the mind into the past, there is now a judgment of conscience, and an expectation of a righteous award. Now if there be within the circle of our natural knowledges or capacities the prediction of any event, we look inevitably for some grounds of the prediction, or some signs that it is a probability, and that the event promised will take place. If it be rumoured among the people of a vast city that a new and magnificent Hall of Justice is to be built, and if there be seen a multitude of workmen collecting materials at the stated place of the proposed building, those materials are a strong proof of the truth of the common rumour. And just so, when the conscience of all mankind tells of a judgment to come, and we see how the materials for that judgment are accumulating, and the demand and necessity for it increasing, and how the busy memory is occupied with collecting and arranging those materials, the proof becomes very strong; the common rumour of the world and of the individual conscience is so corroborated, that one who looks fairly at the light of nature, even apart from that of Revelation, cannot doubt. And every instance of the power of memory, every elucidation of the laws under which the mind acts in its operations of remembrance, and every instance of the manner in which conscience accompanies this work, affords additional conviction. The first instance we shall give of the involuntary power of memory, is that noted one presented by Coleridge, which shall

be related mainly in the words and with the conclusions of that eminent man. The fact that the case may be so familiar to some of our readers as to be almost a truism does not lessen its importance. A young woman, he says, of four or five-and-twenty, who could neither read nor write, was seized with a nervous fever, during which the priests and monks in the neighbourhood supposed that she became possessed of the devil. She continued incessantly talking Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, in very pompous tones, and with most distinct enunciation. The case had attracted the particular attention of a young physician, and by his statement many eminent physiologists and psychologists visited the town, and cross-examined the case on the spot. Sheets full of her ravings were taken down from her own mouth, and were found to consist of sentences coherent and intelligible each for itself, but with little or no connection with each other. Of the Hebrew, a small portion only could be traced to the Bible; the remainder seemed to be in the Rabbinical dialect. A trick or conspiracy was out of the question. Not only had the young woman ever been a harmless, simple creature, but she was evidently labouring under a nervous fever. In the town of which she had been a resident for many years, as a servant in different families, no solution presented itself. The physician, however, determined to trace her past life, step by step; for the patient herself was incapable of returning a rational answer. He searched out the place of her nativity, and from a surviving uncle learned that the patient had been charitably taken by an old Protestant pastor at nine years of age, and had remained with him some years, till his death. Of this pastor the uncle knew nothing, but that he was a very good man. With great difficulty he at length discovered a niece of the pastor's, who had lived with him as his housekeeper, and had inherited his effects, and who remembered the girl. Anxious inquiries were made concerning the pastor's habits, and the solution of the phenomenon was soon obtained. For it appeared that it had been his custom for years to walk up and down a passage of his house, into which the kitchen door opened, and to read to himself with a loud voice out of his favourite books. A considerable number of these were still in the niece's possession. She added, that he was a very learned man, and a great Hebraist. Among the books were found a collection of Rabbinical writings, together with several of the Greek and Latin Fathers; and the physician succeeded in identifying so many passages with those taken down at the young woman's bedside, that no doubt could remain in any rational mind concerning the true origin of the impression made on her nervous system. "This authenticated case," Coleridge concludes, "furnishes both proof and instance that relics of sensation may exist for an indefinite time in a latent state, in the very same order in which they were originally impressed; and as we cannot rationally suppose the feverish state of the brain to act in any other way than as a stimulus, this fact, and it would not be difficult to adduce several of the same kind, contributes to make it even probable that all thoughts are in themselves imperishable; and that, if the intelligent faculty should be rendered more comprehensive, it would require only a different and apportioned organization, the body celestial instead of the body terrestrial, to bring before every human soul the collective experience of its whole past existence. And this, perchance, is the dread book of judgment, in whose mysterious hieroglyphics every idle word is recorded. Yea, in the very nature of a living spirit, it may be more possible that heaven and earth should pass away, than that a single act, a single thought, should be loosened or lost from that living chain of causes, to all whose links, conscious or unconscious, the free will, our only absolute self, is coextensive and copresent." This last remark respecting the copresence of the will in all our intelligent life, conscious or unconscious, is of the utmost solemnity and importance. Dr. Abercrombie relates another example, which he puts under the phenomena of dreams, but which is in reality a development of memory. It occurred with one of his own intimate friends, a gentleman connected with one of the principal banks in Glasgow. He was at his place at the teller's desk, when a person entered, demanding payment of the sum of six pounds. There were several waiting, who were entitled to be attended to before him; but he was extremely impatient, and rather noisy; and being likewise a remarkable stammerer, he became so annoying that another gentleman requested the teller to pay him his money and get rid of him. He did so, accordingly, but with an expression of impatience at being obliged to attend to him before his turn, and thought no more of the transaction. At the end of the year the books of the bank could not be made to balance, the deficiency being exactly six pounds. He spent days and nights in endeavouring to discover the error, but without success; when at last one night retiring to bed

much fatigued, he dreamed of being at his place in the bank, where the transaction with the stammerer passed before him in all its particulars. He found on examination that the sum paid had not been inserted in the book of accounts, and that it exactly amounted to the error in the balance. His memory, which had failed him during the day, had wrought during sleep with perfect exactness. This was simply an instance of the revival of old associations, which had passed for a season from the mind and been forgotten. Thus it is that all mistakes in our accounts for eternity, arising from forgetfulness here, will be rectified when the mind acts with its full power in the spiritual world. The stars come out by night that were hidden by the day, and ten thousand thousand worlds of transactions and of consequences will be revealed in the firmament of man's consciousness, when the delusions of time and sense shall have given way to the realities of eternity. From the experience of Niebuhr, the celebrated Danish traveller, Dr. Abercrombie relates an instance of the vividness with which, as the light of the day of this world is retiring, the past realities, that are to encircle our being in the judgment, throng upon the mind; whether they be scenes of innocent delight, or of guilt and terror. When old, blind, and so infirm that he was able only to be carried from his bed to his chair, he used to describe to his friends the scenes which he had visited in his early days, with wonderful minuteness and vivacity. When they expressed their astonishment, he told them that as he lay in bed, all visible objects shut out, the pictures of what he had seen in the East continually floated before his mind's eye, so that it was no wonder he could speak of them as if he had seen them yesterday. With like vividness the deep intense sky of Asia, with its brilliant and twinkling hosts of stars, which he had so often gazed at by night, was reflected, in the hours of stillness and darkness, on his inmost soul. Now these were simply the beautiful images of nature, that, having once made their impressions on a sensitive soul, could never be forgotten. But if pictures daguerreotyped, as it were, upon the soul from abroad, can thus be reproduced after the lapse of a lifetime, as vivid as when the soul first received into its depths, as in a mirror, the reflection of the glory of God's universe, how much more certainly, with how much greater exactitude, must everything which the mind itself has originated, every spontaneous movement of thought and feeling, every development of character, be treasured in the memory, to be reproduced when conscience calls for it! If Niebuhr's memory had been filled with scenes of sin, or with the recollection of sensual and sinful pleasures, instead of those exquisite images of Oriental scenery, how intensely painful would his old age have been in the reproduction of such accumulated forms of evil, with conscience passing judgment on them all! Sometimes the acquisitions, the knowledges, of the earliest period of life, long utterly disused and forgotten, come suddenly and spontaneously again into power and exercise, as indestructible possessions of the soul. Sometimes it seems as if an invisible power were busy removing or replacing at will, as in a camera obscura, the pictures in the memory. Sometimes those that lie lowest, at the bottom of the pile, are placed uppermost, excluding all others, and sometimes the last drawn are the last seen. But how easy for the Divine Being, acting simply by the laws of the mind, to bid the soul stand still, and to draw forth before it, plate after plate, the impressions of every moment, hour, day, week, of existence, and let the conscience meditate upon it! And what an employment for a guilty and unpardoned soul! Even a single scene of guilt may fully arrest and occupy the mind for almost any period. There are cases of persons, whose sane and healthy action of mind has been disordered, having their consciousness arrested upon one single event or idea, and remaining involved in that event, or revolving that idea, for the period of near fifty years. This we call insanity. But suppose an immortal mind to stand thus petrified as it were in the eternal world for a similar interval of time, brooding in guilty consciousness over some one scene, idea, or act of guilt. Would not this be one of the direst images by which the mind can body forth its conceptions of the misery of hell? When the missionary, Mr. Moffat, had once been preaching to the natives in Africa, his attention was arrested by a young man in the midst of a group that had gathered around him, to whom he was preaching over from memory the sermon he had heard, imitating Mr. M.'s gestures, as well as repeating his language, with great solemnity. He repeated the sermon almost verbatim, and when Mr. Moffat remarked to him that he was doing what he himself could not have done, he did not appear conscious of any superior ability, but touched his forehead with his finger, and remarked, "When I hear anything great, it remains there." By "great," he evidently meant in the sense of solemnity as connected with the soul's destiny in the eternal world. And indeed there is

nothing great but with reference to eternity, nothing worth preserving or remembering but in its relation to that. But all things that have the stamp of that greatness remain there, as the poor untutored negro observed, there in the mind, and can never pass from the memory. The instances of memory we have presented are most of them involuntary, spontaneous; they are instances of power, of activity, which could not be checked or prevented. Had it been ever so much against the will of the master of the faculty, that would have made no difference. The busy operator, with the utmost indifference to the soul's wishes, would have brought out and displayed the mind's innumerable stores. It is no matter whether they be full of sin and shame, or such as the mind would delight to avouch and greet again as its creations or possessions. The memory does not ask whether the mind be pleased with them, but starts them into being. Nay, the more displeasing they are, the more certain they are to be recalled; for this is one manifest way in which the law of association acts, and anything which the mind greatly fears, is for that very reason held tight to it. If you put by an article of your experience, and say that it is proscribed, debarred from remembrance; if you say, I never wish to see that again, let it be buried and never have a resurrection—it may be a single word, deed, look, event, or incident—the very label which you put upon it, “never to be revealed,” the very burial service which you perform over it, the very act of your will, consigning it to eternal banishment and forgetfulness, secure its eternal existence and power over you. Your unwillingness to look at it compels you to look. Your dread and unwillingness give it, in fact, an additional, morbid, torturing action within you, and attraction over you. Hatred is, in some respects, a stronger bond than friendship. What we hate and dread we remember with a dreadful energy, and so long as the hatred and dread exist, the object of it cannot be forgotten. We have reason to believe that even to a guilty soul nothing will be more dreadful, more hateful, than the realities of past sins. The state of a man's system in health may not attract his notice. It seems the very plenitude of health to be in such enjoyment of it, that no particular sensations excite notice. But let there be a festering wound in any organ in the system, and it shall excite more notice than the healthful state of the whole system besides. If there could be such a thing as a coal of living fire wound up as a ganglion in a man's nervous system, it would compel and concentrate all his attention. But every sin, unforgiven, is such a coal of fire. The secretions of evil, of guilt, in our experience, are secretions of irritating, painful action, secretions of remorse, compelling the remembrance. The more painful they are, the more we would forget them; but of course the more we would forget them, the more certainly we remember them. We can quicken memory, but we cannot dispossess it of any of its stores, we cannot make ourselves forget. The very attempt at forgetfulness does but startle the memory. The involuntariness of memory is the security for its full and impartial action at the judgment. The involuntariness of memory grows out of the nature of the law of association. By this law of our being, one thing, by having been connected with another, suggests and recalls it. In this way all events and all thoughts may be so linked together that if one be preserved the whole are inevitably in existence. Now there being a connection between every thought and thing in God's universe, and some other thought or thing, and between every experience in our nature and some other experience, it is impossible, under this law, but that all should come to light, impossible that anything whatever should be lost. If two persons, or things, or ideas, are seen but once in proximity or relation, the association may be weak; one may not now necessarily suggest the other. But if seen often, the association becomes so strong as to be inevitable and irresistible. Thus, if a man be a notorious drunkard, every time you see that man you will think of his habit of drunkenness; or if a man be a profane swearer, every time you see that man, or ever hear of him, you will think of his habit of profane swearing. The thought of a man conspicuous in a page of history which is well known, brings up the details of that history. What person ever thinks of William Tell, without seeing the child, the arrow, and the apple? If there be an alarm-bell, which we are accustomed to hear rung only on occasions of danger, the sound of the bell will always suggest the image of the danger; so, the moment we hear the fire-bell, the mind inevitably pictures the evil of which it is the warning. In the country, when the bell tolls slowly and at measured intervals, you instantly think of death and a funeral. On the other hand, the noise of sleigh-bells brings to the mind all ideas of life and activity; a bracing atmosphere, a fine road covered with snow, the laughter of merry parties, the health and activity of winter. Again, you can scarcely hear the sound of the violin, but it suggests the

dance ; of the drum, but it brings before you all the excitement and fury of war. A case of surgical instruments tells you of ghastly wounds. The smell of camphor in a room makes you inquire if any one be ill ; so does the sight of a physician entering the house. These are common instances of the operation of the law of association, in regard to things seen or known in connection or relation. It is a law, which, even viewed merely in an external operation, as a cord, binding our knowledges in bundles, may be as powerful for evil as for good. We may lay hold upon it for the accomplishment of a happy and useful training of the mind and heart, or an education in all folly and misery. The law of association is at the foundation of most of our prejudices and superstitions. Children, whose minds are filled with nursery tales of ghosts and goblins, are afraid to be left alone in the dark ; darkness has become associated in their mind with frightful images. Now it is possible to conceive of its being associated with nothing but images of security and repose. The degree of activity and wideness of sweep in this law, in different minds, may make a genius out of one person, a dull plodder out of another. It has much to do with the development and power of the imagination. The might and majesty of its action, amidst sublime materials, may be seen in the poetry of Milton, whose imagination combined, in such intensity and comprehensiveness, the associative and aggregative faculty. The constitution of the mind of John Foster was remarkable in this respect. His associations were intensely vivid, so that words affected him with all the power of realities. In one of his Essays he speaks of a young person (and he is supposed to refer to himself, at a period when he was enchanted with the stories of Gregory Lopez and other recluses), with whom at any time the word "hermit" was enough to transport him, like the witch's broom-stick, to the solitary hut, surrounded by shady, solemn groves, mossy rocks, crystal streams, and gardens of radishes. The words "woods" and "forests" are said to have produced in his mind the most powerful emotion. In one of his letters he says, "I have just been admiring the marvellous construction of the mind, in the circumstance of its enabling me, as I sit by my candle here, in a chamber at Chichester, to view almost as distinctly as if before my eyes, your house, the barn, the adjacent fields, neighbouring houses, and a multitude of other objects. I can go through each part of the house, and see the exact form of the looms, tables, maps, cakes of bread, and so on, down to my mother's thimble. Yet I still find myself almost three hundred miles off. At present I take no notice of the things now about me ; but perhaps at some future time, at a still greater distance, I may thus review in imagination the room in which I now write, and the objects it contains ; and I find that few places where I have continued some time can be thus recollected without some degree of regret ; particularly the regret that I did not obtain and accomplish all the good that was possible at that place, and that time. Will it be so, when hereafter I recollect this time, and this place ?" This is exceedingly striking, and we are here brought from mere external things, whether of knowledge or imagination, to inward experiences, the voice of conscience, the goings on of our inward and permanent being. Here it is, and in the circle of the sweep of connection between the moral responsibilities of that permanent being and the world around us, that the law of association acts for eternity ; and if it be true, as Wordsworth declares, that the faculty of imagination was given us to incite and support the eternal part of our being, equally true it is that the associative law and faculty bears reference to the same. It is with reference to the responsibilities and realities of eternity, and to the materials which we ourselves have gone on voluntarily providing for eternity, that it possesses such indestructible and unlimited dominion. Without this law, the memory would be a thing of chance, a perfect chaos. By this law, all things are connected, so connected, that, begin at whatever part of the chain you may, be sure of whatever link you please, all the rest will follow, or may be regained. There can be nothing lost, nothing forgotten. But this law is not that of mere connection, by evident and known links of circumstances ; it is also that of suggestion. One idea, or train of ideas, that may have been introduced by direct connection with some present person or thing, shall suggest to the mind another, by mere resemblance or contrast, or by an abrupt transition, of which, at the time, we can give no account. The causes by which the law of association is thus rendered active and powerful are multitudinous almost beyond computation. And they respect almost equally the power and activity of memory, and the processes of present thought. If I see a face resembling that of a dear absent or departed relative or friend, I say, it reminds me of that beloved individual ; it may also suggest to me a thousand busy thoughts in the present or for the future. Now the occasions on which this suggestive power is exercised are as

multiplied as the experiences of our being. The various innumerable and interminable relations between external things, cause and effect, resemblance and contrast, nearness of time and place, position, preceding or succeeding, high or low, first or last, order or disorder; and in moral and intellectual processes and experiences, the same and other relations, influenced and varied by everything that can have power in building up our being, in developing our character; as the home and discipline of childhood, the instructions and examples of the family circle, the tenor of our pursuits and studies, the books read, the kind of minds conversed with, the habits of sentiment, opinion, feeling, action, formed and indulged; all these are occasions and influences, on and under which the law of association works. The part which this law of association, therefore, is to play in men's future judgment, and in the determination of their state for eternity, is evident. Without it, except by an external manifestation of things, as in a book, there could be no judgment, and but a weak self-condemnation. If, for example, when a man sees a fellow-being with whom, in time past, he has had transactions, the sight of that person did not recall those transactions, if each particular were a thing to be remembered by itself, and had no associating links of thought and feeling, no power of relation to bring up other things, a man might meet a person whom he has greatly injured, and yet not meet again the memory of that injury. A man might meet another, against whom he has borne false witness, so as to fill the slandered man's life with misfortune and misery, and yet might feel little or no compunction at the meeting, because of the want of this law of association, whereby things that have been together, or related together, suggest each other. Accordingly, because of the weakness of this law of association in some persons, there is a great defect in memory; and of course the vividness of one's recollections must be greatly dependent on the energy and power with which this law acts. A man's compunction or remorse for sin will depend greatly on his remembrance of the circumstances and feelings with which the sin was committed. And if by any means it could be possible to evade this law of association, if you could break up the inevitable chain that connects every part of a man's being with all his feelings and memories, and with him every creature and thing he has ever had to do with, if you could loosen some link, and part the series, then a man's condemnation and misery on account of sin might be not so inevitable, that is, his self-condemnation, and his misery from compunction and remorse. So much of the essence of this article of remorse depends on the remembrance of things in their order and connection, on the remembrance of associated feelings, on the remembrance of little circumstances that surrounded any act, and made up what might be called the scenery of it, that if a man could succeed in getting rid of these, if he could break the links of association, if he were not bound inevitably and for ever to them, or if he could make a chaos or confusion out of them, he would be comparatively secure. But there is no possibility of this. In being judged, a man is to be thrown back, not on the bare recollection of his sins, but on all the circumstances and feelings in and with which they were committed. Not merely the sin will be remembered, but all the then reproaches of conscience, all the light under which it was committed, all the self-deception exercised will be made plain, all the aggravations of the sin will come to view, and all the dreadful feelings that followed it will be renewed and deepened. Every sin of injury against others, against the feelings of others, against the interests of others in any way, will be connected with all the materials of compunction and remorse that preceded, accompanied, or grew out of it. And sometimes little circumstances, or what seemed little at the time, shall have extraordinary power, be invested with a world of feeling and of meaning. A single look, a single word, a circumstance that passed like a flash of lightning, shall have meaning and feeling enough connected with it to be dwelt upon for ever and ever. We might consider this in the case of the murderer; a dying word, a dying look of his victim, shall have more horror to him in the recollection, than the bare remembrance of his crime could ever have. And there may be cases in which the exercise of a cruel, severe, or hard-hearted disposition, the turning away from the cry of a fellow-being in distress, the infliction of a pang on the feelings by a cruel or contemptuous word, shall be followed by the face of the man so grieved, by the picture of the wounded spirit with the arrow festering in it, in the soul of the sinner, to dwell there for ever. For it must be that every injury shall have a time for its revenge; every violence done to the feelings, or the welfare of others, shall be perfectly remembered, and in this very way memory shall have its revenge. So that a dying murdered man, if he wished for eternal vengeance on his murderer, wished to make

it secure beyond escape and for ever, and had the command over the mind of the assassin to write there whatever he pleased through eternity, need only say that one word, "remember." And every poor, oppressed bondman, and every individual helplessly borne down by a man greedy of gain, and every creature, indeed, unjustly treated in any way, need only say, "remember." For this law of association makes such remembrance eternally perfect. And this law, though it be less active and apparently less perfect now in some persons than in others, and sometimes exceedingly deficient, yet is perfect and universal in the very structure of our being; and when the peculiar causes that now hinder its perfect operation in some minds shall be removed, will bring everything together. We often look with surprise in this world at some men's carelessness in regard to sin, at the hardness of their conscience, at the utter absence of conviction. It is principally because this law of association is not now in active operation in regard to the past. And hence a man sometimes thinks he has escaped from his past sins, or that the remembrance of them, if it comes, will not be so severe and terrible, the consciousness of them not so fresh, so lively, so powerful. But it will. And, moreover, there are things on which, at the time, he dwelt but for a moment, flashes of thought and feeling, gone as soon as experienced, and movements of the soul covered and put out of view by other successive movements, on which he is to dwell, and which he is to experience again, at leisure. Flashes of thought, feeling, judgment, that passed at the time like lightning, although with a voice as of God's thunder; he is to see them again and deliberately; he is to hear the peal again, and dwell upon it; he is to listen to the voice of conscience again, and dwell upon it. And he is to do this with larger associations still, a more comprehensive circle of associated considerations, than he then deemed himself encompassed by. His connections with the universe, his place under God's government, his attitude in regard to God's law, his place under the atonement, his relation to Jesus Christ, all his relations as a spiritual being, are to be dwelt upon. How the law of God, and the character of God, and the weight of his own infinite obligations to God were connected with his own sins, with every one of them, he did not care to consider, when he committed them. What light they threw upon them, how much more aggravated they made them than they were when considered merely with reference to society or to one's self, he had not time, in the whirl of sin, to think of. What they were in the light of the cross of Christ, in reference to the suffering of Christ, in reference to the scheme of redemption, their associations with this scheme, and the condemnation they draw for ever from it, he had neither time nor inclination to examine. He would not have had inclination, if he had had time; and this was a part of the operation of the law of association, from which, above all else, if he had seen it, he would have desired to be released. But he will have plenty of time for its consideration. And the law of association in his mind will carry him, in all these directions, into an infinitude of conviction and remorse. In the direction toward God, as well as toward men, toward Christ as well as toward God, toward the law and the gospel, the associated relations, consequences, and condemnation of his sins will be boundless and eternal. This is the structure of our being. What subject, exclaimed Mr. Burke, on one occasion, does not branch out into infinity? This is especially the case with the moral relation of our being. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. How single circumstances connect worlds of dreadful meaning, we sometimes see developed in a striking manner. A man's sins in this world are often like old forgotten, buried, coins. They have grown rusty and illegible. They are laid away in the mind like the lumber in the shop of an antiquary. But they all have an image and superscription. They have dates and hieroglyphics, full of meaning. And there is a process by which they may be restored. The rust can be rubbed from the surface, and by fire, if no way else, the letters can again be read. So it is with men's forgotten sins. They are to have a resurrection. Some of them shall rise even with the body, shall pass from this earthly body into that spiritual body, which is to spring from it. For as the body that is laid in the grave is to be in some sense the germ of that body which is to be raised, so the character of the body which is to be raised shall be determined by the character of the body which is interred. He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption. Sin is the seed, sin and death shall be the harvest. Neither can the sins, which are not written in a man's constitution, be forgotten, any more than those which, in their consequences in his spiritual body, are to rise with him in the resurrection. All shall come to light. The image and superscription shall be visible. The consideration of this law of our nature suggests some solemn admonitions, not only with reference to the

inevitable memory and production of all our past experience at the judgment, but with reference to the character we are forming now. What are our habits of association? Do they bind us to God and salvation? Are we linked by them to the cross and the Saviour? We have the power to connect ourselves everlastingly with the elements of heaven or hell. A man may surround his soul with the scenery of either world, may live with fiends or angels beforehand. With what thoughts does he keep company? What are the habitual trains of association in his ideas and feelings? They bind him to themselves, whatever be their nature, every day, month, year, more closely, more unalterably, more indissolubly. If they are evil—and they are evil—if God be excluded from them, then they grow stronger and stronger, till a man is taken in his own iniquity, and holden with the cords of his sin. And at length it were as easy to change the very laws of nature as to change the current of association, which has become indissoluble habit. Of what infinite importance is it that the train of a man's habitual associations be elevated and holy! Let him remember that his daily habits of association are his education for eternity. They may grow up and steal upon him as imperceptibly in progress as the green blade steals from the ground and passes into the ripe full corn in the ear, ready for the harvesting. But their daily tenor is developing and fixing his character for eternity. Therefore, with what tender care and mercy does God surround us with truths, providences, and influences, to win us to Himself, to gain for His love and grace the ruling place in our affections. (*G. B. Cheever, D.D.*)

The power of memory :—The completeness of passive memory to receive and retain everything that comes in contact with the mind, even though it enter consciousness as faint as a ray of light from a star so remote that it twinkles one second and fades the next, is one of the interesting—shall I say startling?—discoveries of mental science. And the proof of this, though indirect, amounts to a demonstration. 1. A first fact is the wonderful power of recollection which some men are known to possess. Sir Walter Scott repeated a song of eighty-eight verses which he had never heard but once, and that, too, three years before. Woodfall, the stenographer, could report entire debates a week after they had been delivered in the House of Commons, and this without any help from writing. But instances like these need not be multiplied. In old age the scenes of childhood and youth reappear with startling clearness, and oftentimes the sins of youth are recalled by a terrified conscience. 2. A second fact is seen in the flood of memories which sudden danger brings to consciousness—the chief events of life, and, among these, things entirely forgotten. This is the experience of persons rescued from drowning or violent death. Admiral Beaufort states that during the moments of submergence every incident of his life seemed to glance across his recollection, not in mere outline, but the whole picture filled up with every minute and collateral feature. (*L. O. Thompson.*)

The boon of forgetfulness :—Great sinners have even prayed for madness as a blessing, because they knew that memory would perish with the mind, of which it is a part. But nature was ever saying to them, "Son, remember." The intoxicating cup owes not a little of its fascination to its power of drowning hateful memories. Lord Byron says—

"I plunged amid mankind. Forgetfulness
I sought in all, save where 'tis to be found,
And that I have to learn."

"Oh, give me the art of oblivion," cried Themistocles. A man once offered to teach a philosopher the art of memory for five talents. "I will give you ten talents," was the reply, "if you will teach me the art of forgetting." Very touching is the old-world fable that between earth and the happy plains of Elysium—the classical heaven—the river Lethe flows, and that whoever tastes its waters forgets all his past. The heathens knew that there could be no happiness hereafter unless somehow memory let go its hold of past sins. Gentle sleep owes its healing power to this, that it helps us to forget. Oh, to bury our dead past as men bury their dead out of their sight; for one sin vividly remembered has sometimes power to make the whole life bitter. "Forgetfulness," it has been said, "is the daughter of time," but our parable shows that she is not always the daughter of eternity, as forgetting is impossible to the unpardoned. (*J. Wells.*) *You can't rub it out!*—"Don't write there," said a little newspaper boy to a dandified youth, whom in the waiting-room of a railway station he saw about to scratch something with his diamond ring on a mirror that was hanging on the wall. "Don't write there!" "Why not?"

"Because you can't rub it out!" So would I have you, my unconverted hearer, to be careful what you write, in your words and actions, on the tablets of your memory. You can't rub it out! and as you think of that surely you will agree with me that "the time past of your lives may suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles." (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Power of memory*.—It is the teaching of modern science that no force is lost in the universe. It may be changed into other forces, but its equivalent is perpetuated. Heat becomes motion, and motion stopped becomes heat. Hence any change in the universe must affect every part of the universe. The jar of the present moment shakes the world, and, Proctor says, all worlds. By your voice you set in motion currents of air which meet on the other side of the globe. No man can speak blasphemy or foulness even in privacy without having the whole universe for an audience. We are moved upon by physical influences, born ages ago, in the remotest domain of space. In like manner the forces which originate in this world affect all worlds. Nothing is lost in the hard domain of matter. Is it likely that anything is lost in the sensitive realm of mind? Let us not think that the mental history of our life is to be lost. Great libraries have been lost and scholars have wept, but the book of the human soul has not yet been destroyed, and all its obscure passages will yet be illumined. All that is needed is a sensation strong enough to bring the past to life. The judgment bar of Christ will make us remember. What a terrible retribution would be the giving of a lost soul to the contemplation of himself! With what anguish would he look on his own vanquished years! "Sad memory weaves no veil to hide the past." Hour after hour, year after year, the past life is unfolded, and in the midst of that past he beholds the form of Jesus and seems to hear His words of sorrow and of doom:—"All thy life long have I stretched forth My hands to thee, and thou wouldest not." A great gulf.—*The bridgeless gulf*.—I. In trying solemnly to speak upon this matter, I shall commence with this—THERE IS NO PASSAGE FROM HEAVEN TO HELL—"They which would pass from hence to you, cannot." Glorified saints cannot visit the prison-house of lost sinners. They did both grow together until the time of the harvest; it is not necessary, now that harvest has come, that they should lie together any longer. It were inconsistent with the perfect joy and the beatific state of the righteous, with its perfect calm and purity, that sin should be admitted into their midst, or that they should be permitted to find companionships in the abodes of evil. Those who are nearest and dearest must be divided from you, if you perish in your sins. II. As we cannot go from heaven to hell, so the text assures us, "NEITHER CAN THEY COME TO US THAT WOULD COME FROM THENCE." The sinner cannot come to heaven for a multitude of reasons. Among the rest, these: 1. First, his own character forbids it. 2. Moreover, not only does the man's character shut him out, but also the sinner's doom. What was it? "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." If it is everlasting, how can they enter heaven? 3. Moreover, sinner, thou canst not go out of the prison-house because God's character and God's word are against thee. Shall God ever cease to be just? III. But now, once again to change the subject for a few minutes, I have to notice in the third place, that while no persons can pass that bridgeless chasm, so NO THINGS CAN. Nothing can come from hell to heaven. Rejoice ye saints in light, triumph in your God for this—no temptation of Satan can ever vex you when once you are landed on the golden strand; you are beyond bowshot of the arch-enemy; he may howl and bite his iron hands, but his howlings cannot terrify and his bitings cannot disturb. IV. Again, we change the strain for a fourth point, and this a terrible one. As nothing can come from hell to heaven, so nothing heavenly can ever come to hell. There are rivers of life at God's right hand—those streams can never leap in blessed cataracts to the lost. Not a drop of heavenly water can ever cross that chasm. 1. See then, sinner, heaven is rest, perfect rest—but there is no rest in hell; unceasing tempest. 2. Heaven, too, is a place of joy; there happy fingers sweep celestial chords; there joyous spirits sing hosannahs day without night; but there is no joy in hell. 3. Heaven is the place of sweet communion with God. 4. There is no communion with God in hell. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The impassable gulf*.—There is in a forest in Germany a place they call the "deer-leap," two crags about eighteen yards apart, between them a fearful chasm. This is called the "deer-leap," because once a hunter was on the track of a deer; it came to one of these crags; there was no escape for it from the pursuit of the hunter, and in utter despair it gathered itself up, and in the death agony attempted to jump across. Of course it fell, and was dashed on the rocks far beneath. Here is a path to heaven. It is plain, it is safe.

Jesus marks it out for every man to walk in. But here is a man who says, "I won't walk in that path; I will take my own way." He comes on until he confronts the chasm that divides his soul from heaven. Now his last hour has come, and he resolves that he will leap that chasm, from the heights of earth to the heights of heaven. Stand back, now, and give him full swing, for no soul ever did that successfully. Let him try. Jump! Jump! He misses the mark, and he goes down, depth below depth, "destroyed without remedy." Men! angels! devils! what shall we call that place of awful catastrophe? Let it be known for ever as "the sinner's death-leap." (*De W. Talmage, D.D.*) *The state of the soul after death:—*

I. DYING DOES NOT SUSPEND CONSCIOUSNESS. The Bible knows nothing of "dormant souls." Death takes down the scaffolding, but not the edifice. II. DYING DOES NOT EFFACE REMEMBRANCE OF THE LIVING. Thought speeds back to earth and earthly friends. Those on earth may forget the spirit world, but those in that world forget not earth. III. DYING DOES NOT CHANGE CHARACTER. A physical change cannot affect moral quality. IV. DYING BRINGS CONDITION AND CHARACTER INTO ACCORD. These two men, whose outward condition was so unlike, were equally different in character. When death came, each went to his own place, one to be "comforted," because the germinant seeds of peace and love were in his own heart; the other to be "tormented," because the devouring flames of unbelief and selfishness were in his own bosom. V. DYING RENDERS THE CONDITION RESULTING FROM CHARACTER PERMANENT. Man may hope that although he die impenitent, he will in the future life find some path to heaven. But the Bible points to none. The rich man had new light, but it did not make him penitent. It did not humble him for his sin. It did not banish his unbelief. It did not expel his selfishness. It did not fill his heart with love. It helped him to see, what perhaps he had before disbelieved, that life on earth is the only time to prepare for life beyond the grave. The only way to heaven is by coming into harmony with God. (*P. B. Davis.*)

*The great gulf:—*The gulf is not one of space or locality, but must be sought in the souls of individuals. It is not of place, but of being. It existed before the rich man and Lazarus died. Death did not create it. As in life, so in death, there can be no passing over it. Between the spiritually-minded man and the carnally-minded man a gulf is fixed. One cannot be as the other: nothing is so impossible. Between the pure wife and mother and the harlot that walks the streets a great gulf is fixed. The gulf cannot be passed—one cannot go to the other. You say, "Cannot the pure woman fall?" She cannot fall, and remain what she is. To fall would not be to cross the chasm; to fall would be filling it up; no gulf would any longer exist; she would have become even as the other. But look at it in this way—each remaining what she is, could either transfer to the other her personal qualities? Could the one on the blissful side convey one drop of purity or joy of womanhood to the other poor wretch in her flame of torment? Would not she have to refuse for herself, and for all her sisters, a drop of water for the cooling of her blistered tongue? No, there can be no crossing; only a filling up. And, if I were disposed to use this parable on either side of the controversy in reference to the future, I should say, in the case of the rich man, that process had already begun. But I do not think it legitimate to use it on either one side or the other. The gulf does not symbolize fixedness of destiny; but the dividing lines of good and evil character, and consequent misery and bliss. No man can live in sin and selfishness, and reap ultimate advantage. A process is going on in him as he thus lives, which separates him in ever greater distance from the possibilities of spiritual peace and bliss. (*W. Hubbard.*)

If one went unto them from the dead.—*Lazarus and his message:—*1. There is something common to this life and that to come. Heaven will give us the full gratifying banquet; but here we have, as it were, the crumbs of the heavenly table, not tossed to us disdainfully, but furnished to us compassionately that we may not perish whilst we are waiting for the hour when all our holy appetites shall be satisfied to the full. 2. Now concerning our estimation of the relative worth of this life and the life beyond. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"—says Christ. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father"—says Christ. Evidently, then, our Lord, whilst He had the warmest sympathies, the truest natural affections, and the keenest eye for whatever gleamed forth of interest in human affairs—loving the earth, though not "earthly"—evidently our Lord makes the preponderant motive of life here, the expectation of complete and satisfying life hereafter. 3. Now concerning the law on which the decision turns as to where we shall be placed in a

world to come. In Christ's last public parable, the test of the judgment is Love. The Gentile nations are brought before Him; the sheep—those who are ready for the green pastures of the ancient but ever fresh kingdom—why are they ready? Because they did whatsoever good their hand found to do. If anybody wanted help and needed pity, they brought help and did not spare their pity; but the goats were those who might have given help, but gave none; who might have given pity, but had none to give. They had no tears ready; and they rather avoided a prison if they had friends in it; for who wants to have to do with friends whose fortunes have fallen? Now how very simple all these tests are, but very searching; but they are all comprised and infolded in this one word "love." Hadst thou any real love? What other test could there be than this? 4. Concerning then the changes and stages of the world to come. Did our Lord say anything about a man getting a bad place in the next world, and afterwards being better off? No. Did He say anything to make persons comfortable in the supposition that there was such a Divine mercy; that if they lived as they would, carelessly here, nevertheless the smart might not be so very keen hereafter? Was it likely that our wise Lord would encourage us in the too common spirit of postponement? Was it likely that our Lord, who was intent upon the best, would allow people foolishly to congratulate themselves that they might aim at something very far below the best, and that at least they would be sure to escape the worst? The only security is this—faith in the heart, that life of the Lord Jesus Christ, which purifies this world and every other: the one life by which a man may be in heaven whilst on earth; the one life by which the very lowest who sit even upon the dunghill, dependent upon the crumbs, and often weeping over their own sorrows, may have communion with God's holy, exalted angels who soar in His presence, or rest at His feet, and who neither shed tears nor suffer pain. (T. T. Lynch.) *The sufficiency of the Divine revelation:—*

I. THERE IS A REVELATION GIVEN TO MAN, TO GUIDE HIM TO HAPPINESS. II. THE REVELATION WHICH IS GIVEN TO MAN IS SUFFICIENT FOR HIS SALVATION. III. IF THE GIVEN REVELATION IS NEGLECTED, AN EXTRAORDINARY INTERPOSITION IS NOT TO BE EXPECTED. IV. THE NEGLECT AND CONTEMPT OF THE REVEALED WORD WILL PROVE THE INEVITABLE RUIN OF THE UNGODLY. (*The Preachers' Treasury.*) *The moral effect of a visit from the dead:—*The folly of demanding that one should visit us from the dead, for the double purpose of proving the future state and preparing us for it, will appear if you will look thoughtfully—1. At the sort of witness and testimony demanded. As to the witness, it is for "one from the dead," and his proposed duty is to "testify" to the living. Not an angel; but a dead man. And he is to come back to earth not to work prodigies, but to bear witness. If such a spirit were seized with either a voluntary or involuntary impulse to return to his earthly theatre of action and begin life afresh, in what way would such a wanderer make himself known to your senses? Can you tell? Now the first thing necessary to your satisfaction would be to recognize him as a human soul, fresh from the fields of immortality. If there should be more than one, you must know all of them to be veritable witnesses in order to believe them, and how will you settle this in each case? In this world a witness, oral or by parole, is always recognized through his body. But the body which this spirit wore on earth lies unstirred in the sepulchre. The general character of human spirits, and the possession of specific secrets for their identification, are very insecure signs, on which we can place but slight dependence. And does it mend the matter at all, even if his body should be raised for this visit? Here you see that the men who reject the evidence of miracle in all other cases insist upon the working of the most stupendous miracle possible, before they will believe one word in this case. Supposing, then, that God had granted the request of Dives by sending Lazarus back to the "five brethren," and they had recognized him, how would his visit have acted upon their minds morally if they were men of thought, reason, and common sense? Let us see. Right there the thrilling spectacle of spectral testimony begins. Their very first thought would relate to the reality of the witness himself; whether he were an entity or a phantasm. They would demand of him the proof that he had really lived and died, and visited the shaded provinces of departed souls, that he had become known to their brother there, and returned to this globe in a provable identity. They would then demand proof that, as a witness, his own mind was not influenced by optical illusion, spectral disease; that it was solid, sound, and well balanced, and so that his narrative was not the fruit of an excited fancy. Nay, they would need to convince themselves that their own brains did not reel before him in delusion. When all this should be settled, then the real difficulties of the apparition witness would but

just begin, if he were not scouted and ridiculed until he were ready to abandon his own convictions and discredit his own story. The very attempt to express the first sentence would confound him, because it would discover to him a set of ethereal conceptions taken up into his own incorporeal existence, with which earth had no analogies, and therefore has no words nor methods by which they can be intelligibly stated or understood. 2. Testimony so given, and by such a deponent, would be totally inadequate to its alleged purpose, both in its nature and effects. How can the eye of the body fixed upon a corporal being convince the understanding about the invisible things of the eternal world? These are things of faith, not of sight, like so many colours of the rainbow. If the risen Christ is no proof to the senses, much less can one like ourselves from the dead be a convincing witness to warn us. It is much more likely that we should want to kill him than to be "persuaded" by him; just as the Jews callously wanted to kill Lazarus of Bethany when Jesus had raised him from the dead. I can easily understand how the presence of a man raised from the dead might terrify a guilty sinner; how the apparition might put him under an appalling spell, so that his heart fluttered; a prisoner under the charms of magic; but I cannot see how the bondage of evil habits could be broken, or the deceptive charms of sin dissolved by such a startling apparition. Even the pure presence of an angel stooping to an earthly mission has been so terrific to holy men, that they have feared death in consequence. But how, if a ghastly spectre should glare upon guilty and hardened men from the solitudes of eternity, and address them in sepulchral tones; surely their blood would curdle, their nerves shrink, their hearts faint, and their life become ice. How can all this be related to genuine repentance? (*T. Armitage, D.D.*) *The claims of revealed truth:—*

I. THERE EXISTS A REVELATION FROM GOD, DESIGNED FOR THE GUIDANCE AND SALVATION OF MAN. II. THIS REVELATION IS FULLY QUALIFIED TO ACCOMPLISH THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH IT WAS GIVEN. III. ON THE REJECTION OF REVELATION, IT IS NOT TO BE EXPECTED THAT ANY SUPERNATURAL VISITATIONS WOULD PRODUCE A SAVING IMPRESSION ON THE HEART. 1. The cause which produces the rejection of the message of God in His written Word, will operate also against the message which might be taught by supernatural agency. 2. It is equally easy to explain away a supernatural visitation, as it is to explain away the evidence of revelation. 3. The inefficiency of supernatural visitations has been shown by experience. 4. It is the positive arrangement of God, that His word, as given in the inspired record, and proclaimed in the established ordinances of grace, shall be the only means of persuasion and conversion; and the promise of the Spirit's influence does not extend to any other instrumentality. IV. THE REJECTION OF DIVINE REVELATION,

IS THE CAUSE OF FUTURE CONDEMNATION AND MISERY. (*J. Parsons.*) *The Divine authority and sufficiency of the Christian religion:—*I. THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE STANDING REVELATION OF GOD'S WILL IN THE SCRIPTURES, TO BRING MEN TO REPENTANCE. 1. The Scriptures give us sufficient instructions what we should believe, or are a sufficient rule of faith. 2. The Scriptures give us complete directions in matters of practice, or are a sufficient rule of life. 3. The Scriptures are attended with sufficient evidence of their truth and divinity. 4. The religion of Jesus proposes sufficient excitements to influence our faith and practice. II. THE VANITY AND UNREASONABLENESS OF THE OBJECTION AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, AND OF DEMANDING ANOTHER. (*President Davies.*) *The unreasonableness of unbelief:—*

I. CONSIDER THE EVIDENCE OF DIVINE TRUTH PRESENTED BY ONE RISEN FROM THE DEAD. 1. The impressions made by one who was seen to rise from the grave, and gave to the spectators his testimony concerning a future state, would undoubtedly be great and solemn. 2. The evidence which would attend everything said by such a person would be irresistible. II. EXAMINE THE EVIDENCE OF DIVINE TRUTH FURNISHED BY THE SCRIPTURES, AND THE ADVANTAGE WHICH THEY POSSESS FOR CONVINCING AND PERSUADING THE MIND. In this examination—1. The thing that meets us is, that the Scriptures were written by God, and were therefore written in the best manner that was possible to accomplish their end. The things which are communicated in the Scriptures concerning our future existence are in their nature the most solemn and impressive which can be conceived. They are such as God thought it wisest and best to communicate, and are therefore certainly the wisest and best possible. In their own nature also, and as they appear in themselves to our eyes, they possess an immeasurable solemnity and importance. 3. Beside the things which a person risen from the dead could unfold, the Scriptures afford many others pre-eminently important and affecting. 4. All these things come directly from God Himself, and are invested with His authority. 5 The Scriptures

were attested by miracles very numerous, and certainly not less solemn and impressive than the resurrection of a man from the dead. III. SHOW THAT THE DOCTRINE IS TRUE. On this subject I observe—1. That we ourselves do not ordinarily dispute the truth of the scriptural declarations, nor the sufficiency of the evidence by which they are supported; and yet are in very few instances persuaded to repent. 2. Those who were witnesses of these very miracles generally did not repent. 3. Among all the persons with whom, while they were anxiously solicitous about their salvation, I have had opportunity to converse, I do not remember even one who ever mentioned his own indisposition to repent, as in any degree derived from the want of evidence to support the truth of the Scriptures. Concluding remarks: 1. It is manifest from these considerations that the reason why mankind do not embrace the gospel is not the want of evidence. 2. From these observations, it is clear that no evidence will persuade a sinful heart. (*T. Dwight, D.D.*)

*The sufficiency of the Divine revelation:—*I. It is UNREASONABLE TO EXPECT THAT GOD SHOULD DO MORE FOR THE CONVICTION OF MEN, THAN TO AFFORD THEM A STANDING REVELATION OF HIS MIND AND WILL; SUCH AS THAT OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES IS. This is strongly implied in Abraham's first answer, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them"; as if he had said—having such means of conviction so near at hand, why should they desire and expect any other? It is in this case of the Scriptures, as in that of God's providence; God does not commonly prove His providence to men by extraordinary instances of His power, and by changing the course of nature, to convince every man in the world that He governs it; but by standing testimonies of His wisdom, and power, and goodness; by these God does sufficiently satisfy considerate men of His government and care of the world. The case is the same as to Divine revelation. We tempt God by demanding extraordinary signs, when we may receive so abundant satisfaction in an ordinary way. II. It is, UPON THE WHOLE MATTER, VERY IMPROBABLE THAT THOSE WHO REJECT THIS PUBLIC REVELATION OF GOD, SHOULD BE EFFECTUALLY CONVINCED, THOUGH ONE SHOULD SPEAK TO THEM FROM THE DEAD. 1. Because, if such miracles were frequent and familiar, it is very probable they would have but very little effect; and unless we suppose them common and ordinary, we have no reason to expect them at all. 2. Men have as great or greater reason to believe the threatenings of God's Word as the discourse of one that should speak to them from the dead. 3. The very same reason which makes men to reject the counsels of God in His Word, would, in all probability, hinder them from being convinced by a particular miracle. 4. Experience does abundantly testify how ineffectual extraordinary ways are to convince those who are obstinately addicted and wedded to their lusts. 5. An effectual persuasion (that is, such a belief as produceth repentance and a good life) is the gift of God, and depends upon the operation and concurrence of God's grace, which there is no reason to expect either in an extraordinary way or in an extraordinary degree, after men have obstinately rejected the ordinary means which God hath appointed to that end. Concluding remarks: 1. Since the Scriptures are the public and standing revelation of God's will to men, and the ordinary means of salvation, we may hence conclude that people ought to have them in such a language as they can understand. 2. Let us hear and obey that public revelation of God's will, which, in so much mercy to mankind, He hath been pleased to afford to us. 3. Those who are not brought to repentance, and effectually persuaded by this clear and public revelation, which God hath made of His will to men in the Holy Scriptures, have reason to look upon their case as desperate. (*Archbishop Tillotson.*)

*The sufficiency of Scripture:—*I. AT FIRST SIGHT WE MIGHT THINK IT ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE FOR US NOT TO OBEY ONE RISING UP FROM THE GRAVE, AND STANDING BEFORE US WITH ALL THE SIGNS AND MYSTERIES OF A SPIRIT COME FROM THE UNSEEN WORLD. In most of us there is a shrinking fear of the supernatural as well as of wonderment, and we can well understand the terror the night-spectre was adapted to produce in the mind of Eliphaz, the friend of Job. The message may or may not be remembered, but, in either case, evil does its work. The memory of the vision becomes fainter and fainter, and the ring of the message dies away in the distance, until at last it is heard no more, thought of and felt no more. Besides, what is simply heard by the ear is apt to be twisted into some meaning of our own construction, and, like tradition generally, be overloaded with strange fables and unnatural descriptions. Hence we learn from the declaration of Abraham—II. THE GREAT VALUE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE SACRED SCRIPTURES. They are ever before us, ever so plain and simple that "a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein." To us we have not only the testimony of Moses and the prophets, but of our Lord Him-

self. With the whole of God's moral revelation before us, bearing with it the evidence of the most ancient life, combined with the evidence of a life wherein ancient and modern meet in harmony and truth, what need we more? It may be said to us, "If we believe not Christ, neither will we believe if one rose from the dead." II. WHY IS THIS? WHY DID ABRAHAM FORESEE THE INUTILITY OF GIVING ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION BEYOND WHAT IS ALREADY GIVEN? Why, if the Bible fails, will a spirit from the dead fail also? The answer is to be found in the intensity and deep-rootedness of man's selfishness. Herein is the problem of man's rejection of the truth of God solved—herein is the mystery of our unbelief and hardness of heart explained. It was selfishness that made a wreck of Dives. He lived for himself, and in that life overlooked the claims of God and man; he lived for "the good things" of the world, and closed out from his conceptions and practical living the "good things" of God. (*W. D. Horwood.*) *Do we need a new revelation?—I. THE DIVINE MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE IS SUFFICIENT FOR ITS PURPOSE.* 1. The purpose of revelation is moral and active. 2. Jesus Christ believed and taught the sufficiency of revelation for this purpose. II. NO SUPERNATURAL MARVEL WILL ACCOMPLISH THIS PURPOSE MORE EFFICIENTLY. 1. The great difficulty to be overcome is not intellectual, but moral. 2. The active and moral purpose of revelation cannot be effected by any external supernatural event. (1) Do not place great reliance on the homiletical effect of lurid pictures of hell. They may deaden conscience while they rouse fear. Dante is not sufficient without Moses and Christ. (2) Do not expect too much from the curative effects of future punishment. (3) Do not regret the loss of miracles. Spiritualism has not proved itself to be a gospel of salvation for character. (4) No longer wilfully refuse to obey the truth, which is able to make us wise unto salvation. (*W. F. Adeney, M.A.*) *Impotent desires in hell.*—Is there love in hell? Do the spirits of the lost remember still those whom they have left behind? And can they feel indeed an interest about their spiritual welfare? Or, are they words which do not bear upon the great point of the parable, and of which, therefore, we are not to look for any parallel in the things of life? Or, was it a mere selfishness still, that he might escape his brothers' reproaches, when they should come to upbraid him for his bad example, that Dives said, "I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." I incline to think that if we are to apply the words to ourselves at all, they convey to us this fact—that in that wretched world, there may spring up desires, good desires, but that it will be too late. For ever and for ever those desires may live, but never to be gratified. And who shall say what an amount of torment might lie in an eternity of impotent and unsatisfied longings? I can conceive of nothing more horrible than to have continually aspirations after something good, yet all the while the consciousness that that good, and after which we aspire, is a thing utterly and eternally impossible. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *The request of Dives for his five brethren.*—I. NOW IT IS ADMITTED BY THIS LOST MAN THAT REPENTANCE IS NECESSARY. 1. I remark, in the first place, that a messenger from the dead—that is, from another world—could not give to you or to me, or to any one else, information more distinct, more explicit, more comprehensive, on any subject that it concerns man to know in order to his repentance and salvation, than the sacred writings have already furnished. 2. Again, such a messenger could not authenticate his mission and his message by evidence more clear, more satisfactory, more convincing, than that by which the Divine authenticity of these writings are sustained. 3. Besides, that disposition of heart, which prevents your repentance under the discoveries and the motives and the influences of revealed truth, would render you impenitent still, "though one rose from the dead." 4. Besides these, there is another consideration: all agents and instruments, ordinary or extraordinary, can only succeed as they are attended by the Divine blessing and influence. 5. If, however, these reasonings fail to produce conviction in any mind now before me, then I have another species of evidence in reserve—most unbending; and it is evidence derived from fact. The request has been granted; the thing has been tried; and it has utterly failed. II. NOW WHAT ARE THE PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS AT WHICH WE SHOULD ARRIVE FROM THIS SUBJECT? 1. And the first is—the sufficiency of revealed truth; so that if persons are not awakened and brought to repentance and conversion by its light and evidence and influence, all extraordinary methods and agencies would be in vain. 2. Secondly, on the admission of the sufficiency of the Divine revelation, then it follows that it is as unreasonable, as it is impious and ungrateful, to desire and to wish for more. 3. Thirdly, as extraordinary messengers and

agents would be useless, I infer that we are not to expect them. 4. Again: I draw another conclusion—humbling, admonitory, and it is this. On the admission that we have sufficient means of instruction and of repentance and of salvation furnished, then how inexcusable the folly and how aggravated the guilt of those who still remain impenitent! 5. And then finally, having yourselves experienced the power and efficacy of Divine truth, and having yourselves experienced repentance unto life, and yourselves richly participating in the blessings of grace and salvation, then be concerned (as it is meet and right and your bounden duty) for your fellow-sinners, that they may be brought to repentance; for your fellow-creatures, that they may be partakers with you of “like precious faith” and love and life and happiness and salvation. (*R. Newton, D.D.*) *A preacher from the dead*:—I. First, it is thought that if one did come from the dead to preach, there would be a CONFIRMATION OF THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL, and a testimony borne at which jeering infidelity would stand aghast in silence. Stop, we will see about that. 1. If, my friends, the testimony of one man who had been raised from the dead were of any value for the confirming of the gospel, would not God have used it before now? Now, God knoweth best; we will not compare our surmises to Divine decision. If God decided that resurrection men should be silent, it was best it should be; their testimony would have been of little worth or help to us, or else it would have been borne. 2. But again, I think it will strike our minds at once, that if this very day a man should rise from his tomb, and come here to affirm the truth of the gospel, the infidel world would be no more near believing than it is now. Infidelity would still cry for something more. It is like the horse-leech; it crieth, “Give, give!” 3. And besides, my friends, if men will not believe the witness of God, it is impossible that they should believe the witness of man. II. It is imagined, however, that if one of “the spirits of the just made perfect” would come to earth, even if he did not produce a most satisfactory testimony to the minds of sceptics, HE WOULD YET BE ABLE TO GIVE ABUNDANT INFORMATION CONCERNING THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. Surely he would have brought down with him some handfuls of the clusters of Eshcol; he would have been able to tell us some celestial secrets, which would have cheered our hearts, and nerved us to run the heavenly race, and put a cheerful courage on. Nothing more could we know that would be of any use. Tattlers, idle curiosity people, and such like, would be mightily delighted with such a man. Ah! what a precious preacher he would be to them, if they could get him all the way from heaven, and get him to tell all its secrets out! But there the matter would end. It would be merely the gratification of curiosity; there would be no conferring of blessing; for if to know more of the future state would be a blessing for us, God would not withhold it; there can be no more told us. If what you know would not persuade you, “Neither would you be persuaded though one rose from the dead.” III. Yet some say, “SURELY, IF THERE WERE NO GAIN IN MATTER, YET THERE WOULD BE A GAIN IN MANNER. Oh, if such a spirit had descended from the spheres, how would he preach? What eloquence celestial would flow from his lips!” I do believe that Lazarus from Abraham’s bosom would not be so good a preacher as a man who has not died, but whose lips have been touched with a live coal from off the altar. Instead of his being better, I cannot see that he would be quite so good. Could a spirit from the other world speak to you more solemnly than Moses and the prophets have spoken? Or could they speak more solemnly than you have heard the word spoken to you at divers times already? Ah! but you say, you want some one to preach to you more feelingly. Then, sir, you cannot have him in the preacher you desire. A spirit from heaven could not be a feeling preacher. It would be impossible for Lazarus, who had been in Abraham’s bosom, to preach to you with emotion. Such a preacher could not be a powerful preacher, even though he came again from the dead. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The sufficiency of the Bible*:—It will be a solemn thought to-night, when, in your own room, you open that holy volume, and think, “This Bible, that is being now preached, this Bible which I am reading, is the highest, best, last, only means by which God undertakes and promises absolutely to convert, teach, comfort, edify, save me. What then? If the hearing and reading God’s Word have not turned my heart, then the resurrection would not do it! nothing would do it!” And with this conclusion, I am confident that all experience will agree. Great events, surprises, sorrows, bereavements, will, by God’s grace, bring a man to his Bible, and then his Bible will bring him to God; and then it would seem as if those events converted him; but the truth is, that God’s Word did the work—the rest only brought him there. But let us understand clearly what this Book is. What is the

Bible? It is the likeness which the Holy Spirit has taken of the mind of Christ. And what is Christ? The likeness of the mind of the Father. Then what is the Bible? The exact and perfect transcript of the Spirit, as the Spirit is the perfect transcript of Christ, and as Christ is the perfect transcript of the mind of God. That is the Bible. No wonder then that whatever is to be done, it is this which must do it. But now we are directed to the manner in which the Bible is to be savingly used. "If they hear not"—that is, if they do not realize it even as if they heard a voice—if they do not hear and obey—"Moses and the prophets, then they would not be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Scripture-evidence sufficient to make men religious*.—I. GOD HAS GIVEN US SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE TO PROVE THE TRUTH OF RELIGION, AND SUFFICIENT ARGUMENTS TO ENFORCE THE PRACTICE OF IT. God has given us all that evidence to prove the truth of Christian religion, and all those arguments to enforce the practice of it, which it was agreeable either to the wisdom of God to give, or the reason of men to expect. I. As to the intrinsic evidence from the excellency of the nature of the thing itself, the duties which Christian religion requires are such as are plainly most agreeable to our natural notions of God, and most conducive to the happiness and wellbeing of men; and this is a proof which might alone be sufficient to convince a wise man that his religion was from God. 2. Besides the intrinsic evidence for the truth of religion from the excellency of the nature of the thing itself, it is moreover proved to be taught and confirmed of God by the most credible and satisfactory testimony that was ever given to any matter of fact in the world. II. The second general proposition I designed to speak to is that such men as will not be persuaded to be sincerely religious by that evidence and those arguments which God has afforded us, WOULD NOT BE PERSUADED BY ANY OTHER EVIDENCE OR MOTIVE OF RELIGION WHICH THEIR OWN UNREASONABLE FANCY COULD SUGGEST TO THEM TO DESIRE. III. In order to the making men truly religious, it is not necessary that God should on His part work more miracles to give them greater convictions, but only THAT THEY ON THEIR OWN PART SHOULD BECOME REASONABLE PERSONS, LAY ASIDE THEIR UNJUST PREJUDICES, AND FORSAKE THEIR UNREASONABLE LUSTS, WHICH HINDER THEM FROM CONSIDERING THE TRUE FORCE OF THE ARGUMENTS OF RELIGION. They have no concern for the interests of truth and virtue. The love of this present world has blinded their eyes, and it is for that reason only that they receive not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto them (1 Cor. ii. 14). (*S. Clarke, D.D.*) I. First, then, let us consider WHETHER THE EVIDENCE UPON WHICH REVELATION STANDS BE IN ITSELF GREATER OR MORE CONVINCING THAN THE EVIDENCE OF ONE COMING FROM THE DEAD CAN BE. II. THAT THE OBJECTIONS WHICH UNBELIEVERS URGE AGAINST THE AUTHORITY OF REVELATION WILL LIE STRONGER AGAINST THE AUTHORITY OF ONE COMING FROM THE DEAD. For, first, as to the nature of this sort of evidence, if it be any evidence at all, it is a revelation, and therefore, whatever has been said against the authority of revelation, will be applicable to this kind of it. And, consequently, those who, upon the foot of natural religion, stand out against the doctrine of the gospel, would much more stand out against the authority of one coming from the dead. And whether it would weigh more with the atheist, let any one consider. For no revelation can weigh with him; for the Being of God, which he disbelieves, is supported with greater arguments and greater works than any revelation can be. And therefore, standing out against the evidence of all nature, speaking in the wonderful works of the creation, he can never reasonably submit to a less evidence. Let, then, one from the dead appear to him, and he will, and certainly may, as easily account for one dead man's recovering life and motion, as he does for the life and motion of so many men, whom he sees every day. But, further, let us suppose a man free from all these prejudices, and then see what we can make of this evidence. If a dead man should come to you, you must suppose either that he speaks from himself, and that his errand to you is the effect of his own private affection for you, or that he comes by commission and authority from God. As to the first case, you have but the word of a man for all you hear, and how will you prove that a dead man is incapable of practising a cheat upon you? Or, allowing the appearance to be real, and the design honest, do you think every dead man knows the counsels of God, and His will with respect to His creatures here on earth? If you do not think this, and I cannot see possibly how you should think it, what use will you make of this kind of revelation? Should he tell you that the Christian faith is the true faith, the way to heaven and happiness, and that God will reward all true believers, you would have much less reason to believe him than now you have to believe Christ and His

apostles. But, on the other side, should you suppose this man to come by the particular order and appointment of God, and consequently that what he says is the word and command of God, you must then be prepared to answer such objections as you are now ready to make against the mission and authority of Christ and His apostles. First, then, we ask, How this commission appears? If you say because he comes from the dead, we cannot rest here, because it is not self-evident that all who come from the dead are inspired. And yet farther than this you cannot go, for it is not supposed that your man from the dead works miracles. The mission of Christ we prove by prophecies and their completion; by the signs and wonders He wrought by the hand of God; by His resurrection, which includes both kinds, being in itself a great miracle and likewise the completion of a prophecy. III. By considering the temper of infidelity. For where unbelief proceeds, as generally it does, from a vitiated and corrupted mind, which hates to be reformed, which rejects the evidence because it will not admit the doctrine, not the doctrine because it cannot admit the evidence; in this case all proofs will be alike, and it will be lost labour to ply such a man with reason or new evidence, since it is not want of reason or evidence that makes him an unbeliever. (*T. Sherlock, D.D.*) *A standing revelation the best means of conviction*:—I. To STATE AND LIMIT THE DUE EXTENT OF IT. II. To CONFIRM THE TRUTH, SO STATED, BY VARIOUS ARGUMENTS AND REFLECTIONS. After which I shall—III. DEDUCE SOME INFERENCES FROM IT. As to the extent of this assertion, we may observe—I. 1. That it is evidently to be understood of such persons only as are placed in the same circumstances with the five brethren in the parable; such, consequently, as have been born, where the true religion is professed, and bred up in the belief of it; have had all the early prejudices of education on the side of truth, and all manner of opportunities and advantages towards acquainting themselves with the grounds of it; and yet, notwithstanding all these advantages, have shut their eyes against it, and withstood its force. 2. Neither is the assertion to be rigorously extended to all those who have been educated under the influence of a Divine revelation, and yet lived in opposition to the rules of it; for there is great reason to believe that there are many persons who, through the heat of their lusts and passions, through the contagion of ill example, or too deep an immersion in the affairs of life, swerve exceedingly from the rules of their holy faith, and yet would, upon such an extraordinary warning as is mentioned in the text, be brought to comply with them. 3. That even of these profligate creatures themselves it is not said that so astonishing a scene would make no manner of impression, would have no present influence upon them; but only that it would not produce a lasting effect, nor work an entire conversion. II. Second general head to CONFIRM BY VARIOUS ARGUMENTS AND REFLECTIONS. And—1. We will suppose that such a message from the dead as that for which the rich man here intercedes is really in itself an argument of greater strength and force to persuade a sinner out of the error of his ways than any standing revelation, however so well attested and confirmed. I will show, nevertheless, that it would not be complied with. Because—(1) It is not for want of strength that the standing ordinary ways of proof are rejected, but for want of sincerity, and a disinterested mind in those to whom they are proposed; and the same want of sincerity, the same adhesion to vice and aversion from goodness, will be equally a reason for their rejecting any proof whatsoever. (2) A motive, however stronger in itself than another, may yet make a weaker impression when employed, after that the motive of less though sufficient strength hath been already resisted. For the mind doth, by every degree of affected unbelief, contract more and more of a general indisposition towards believing; so that such a proof, as would have been closed with certainty at the first, shall be set aside easily afterwards, when a man hath been used to dispute himself out of plain truths, and to go against the light of his own understanding. (3) The peculiar strength of the motive may of itself, perhaps, contribute to frustrate the efficacy of it, rendering it liable to be suspected by him to whom it is addressed. He is conscious how little he hath deserved so extraordinary a privilege. (4) How far these suspicions of his will be improved and heightened by the raillery and laughter he will be sure to meet with on this head from his old friends and companions. (5) Time and a succession of other objects will bring it about. Every day the impression loses somewhat of its force, and grows weaker, till at length it comes to lie under the same disadvantage with the standing proofs of the gospel. Hitherto I have supposed that the evidence of one risen from the dead hath really the advantage, in point of force and efficacy, of any standing revelation, how well soever attested and confirmed; and, proceeding on

that supposition, I have endeavoured to show that such evidence, however in itself forcible, would certainly not be complied with. But the truth is, and, upon a fair balance of the advantages on either side it will appear that the common standing rules of the gospel are a more probable and powerful means of conviction than any such message or miracle:—1. For this plain reason, because they include in them that very kind of evidence which is supposed to be so powerful, and do, withal, afford us several other additional proofs of great force and clearness. Among many arguments by which the truth of our religion is made out to us, this is but one, that the promulgers of it—Jesus Christ and His apostles—did that very thing which is required to be done, raised men and women from the dead, not once only but often, in an indisputable manner, and before many witnesses. 2. Another great advantage which the standing proofs of the gospel have over such an extraordinary appearance, that this hath all its force at once upon the first impression, and is ever afterwards in a declining state, so that the longer it continues upon the mind, and the oftener it is thought of, the more it loses; whereas those, on the contrary, gain strength and ground upon us by degrees, and the more they are considered and weighed the more they are approved. 3. That, let the evidence of such a particular miracle be never so bright and clear, yet it is still but particular, and must, therefore, want that kind of force, that degree of influence, which accrues to a standing general proof, from its having been tried and approved, and consented to by men of all ranks and capacities, of all tempers and interests, of all ages and nations. (*Bishop Atterbury.*)

I. 1. One coming from the dead, angel or man, cannot bring a doctrine more necessary, there being in the Scriptures sufficient direction about the way to true happiness, for which we have not only express testimony, but apparent reason and sensible experience. 2. Better arguments cannot be urged, nor more persuasively. The gospel is “the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. i. 24); and surely God knoweth all the wards of the lock, and what kind of keys will fit the heart of man. What do we need more to move us? Shall God pipe to you in a sweeter strain than that of gospel grace or gospel promises? Is the giving Himself and His Christ a price too cheap to purchase your hearts? or must He thunder to you in a more dreadful accent than the horrors of everlasting darkness? Oh! but one that cometh from the dead is supposed to testify his own sight and knowledge, and so to speak more feelingly. And have not God’s messengers some experience? Cannot they say, We declare to you the things which we have seen and heard and felt? 3. It is not because he could propound these truths with more certainty, for these things are already propounded to our understandings, and we have sensible confirmation. (1) They are propounded to our understandings with a fair and full credibility. The holy Scriptures have in themselves a self-evidencing light, by which they make it out to the consciences of men that they are of God. (2) We have sensible confirmations. We are wrought upon by sense. Now is not ordinarily the word as sensibly confirmed to us as it would be by a vision or apparition from the dead? (a) There is the holiness of professors (1 Cor. xiv. 25). (b) There is the constancy of the martyrs that have ratified this truth with the loss of their dearest concerns (Rev. xii. 11). (c) Then there is the inward feeling of God’s children; they find a power in the word, convincing, changing, comforting, fortifying their hearts. They have answerable impressions on their hearts (Heb. viii. 10). (d) Those that have no experience of this have a secret fear of the power of the word (John iii. 20). (e) There are also outward effects of the power of the word; its propagation throughout all the world within thirty years or thereabout. (f) Then consider the many sensible effects of the word, as the accomplishment of prophecies, promises, threatenings, and answer of prayers. God’s providence is a comment upon Scripture. II. Against it. THERE ARE MORE RATIONAL PREJUDICES THAT LIE AGAINST ANY OTHER WAY THAN THIS WAY THAT GOD HATH TAKEN. As to instance in the matter in hand. 1. It is no mean scruple about the lawfulness of hearkening to one that should come from the dead, since they are out of the sphere of our commerce, and it is a disparagement to the great doctor of the Church. Against consulting with the dead, see Deut. xviii. 10–12, with 14, 15. 2. It is not so sure a way. How could we trust or believe any one that should bring a message from the dead, since impostors are so rife? Satan can turn himself into an angel of light. 3. It is not so effectual a course as some think. The Jews would not believe Lazarus, when, after he had been four days dead, he was raised up again. 4. It is not so familiar a way, and therefore not so fit to instil faith, and reduce men to God’s purpose by degrees, as the written Word, to which we may have recourse without affrightment, and

that at all times. 1. That man is apt to indent with God about believing and repenting upon terms of his own making (Matt. xxvii. 42). God will not always give sensible confirmation. 2. There lie more prejudices by far against any way of our devising than against the course which God hath instituted for the furthering of our repentance. Man is an ill caterer for himself. All God's institutions are full of reason, and if we had eyes to see it we could not be better provided for. 3. God in giving the Scriptures hath done more for us than we could imagine, yea, better than we could wish to ourselves. He hath certainly done enough to leave us without excuse. Try what you can do with Moses and the prophets. It is a great mercy to have a rule by which all doctrines are to be tried, to have a standard and measure of faith, and that put into writing to preserve it against the weakness of memory and the treachery of evil designs, and that translated into all languages. 4. That we are apt to betray present advantages by wishes of another dispensation, as that we may have oracles and miracles. It is but a shift to think of other means than God hath provided. Man is ever at odds with the present dispensation. It is a sign the heart is out of order, or else any doctrine that is of God would set it a-work. 5. Those that like not the message will ever quarrel at the messenger; and when the heart is wanting, something is wanting. 6. How credulous we are to fables, and how incredulous as to undoubted truths; spirits and apparitions, these things are regarded by us, but the testimony of the Spirit of God speaking in the Scriptures is little regarded.

III. How to IMPROVE THE SCRIPTURES TO REPENTANCE. 1. Believe them as you would an oracle or one from the dead. Consider the authority and veracity of God. The authority of God; God commandeth men to repent; charge the heart in the name of God, as it will answer to him another day. 2. Urge thy heart with it; recollect yourselves: "What shall we then say to these things?" (Rom. viii. 31). (*T. Mantou, D.D.*) *That a standing revelation of God is evidence sufficient for Divine things*.—1. What we are to understand by a Divine revelation. 2. For the several kinds of Divine revelations. That they were various the apostle to the Hebrews tells us (chap. i. 1). And, therefore, in the third place, to show you what advantages this standing revelation of the Scripture hath above private revelations made to particular persons, and frequently repeated and renewed in several ages—1. It is a more certain way of conveyance of things, and more secure and free from imposture. 2. It is a more general and universal way of conveyance, which is evident from the common experience of the world, who have pitched upon this way of writing things in books, as that which doth most easily convey the knowledge and notice of things to the generality of men. 3. It is a more uniform way of conveyance—that is, things that are once written and propagated that way lay equally open to all, and come in a manner with equal credit to all, it being not morally possible that a common book that passeth through all hands, and which is of vast importance and concernment, should be liable to any material corruption without a general conspiracy and agreement, which cannot be but that it must be generally known. 4. It is a more lasting way of conveyance. 5. It is a more human way of conveyance, which requires less of miracle and supernatural interposition for the preservation of it. I come now to the fourth thing I proposed to be considered—namely, that there is sufficient evidence of the Divinity of the Scriptures. Now for the Scriptures of the New Testament, I desire but these two things to be granted to me at first—1. That all were written by those persons whose names they bear. 2. That those who wrote those books were men of integrity, and did not wilfully falsify in anything. I should come now to the fifth and last thing—namely, that it is unreasonable to expect that God should do more for our conviction than to afford us a standing revelation of His mind and will, such as the books of the holy Scriptures are. (*Archbishop Tillotson.*) *Ghosts do not deter men from sin*.—By a ghost we mean the spirit of man stripped of its earthly appendages—without the material and visible conditions which distinguish his appearance among men. Now, it is not necessary for a man to go out of the world to realize this condition. The world is full of such ghosts. They are coming forth out of the depth of their ruin, their woe, and talking to us. But who heeds them? 1. See the ruined rich men—men of society, stripped of everything that marked them among men. They are but ghosts stalking among us. They talk to us of the folly, the vanity of riches, of the bitterness that comes with ill-gotten gains. They speak of the torment at the end of every such course. Who listens to these gibbering ghosts? Is there one man in a thousand who is turned from his course by what they say? 2. Then there are the ghosts of those who have

been destroyed by intemperance. Oh, what hideous wrecks, ghosts—what testimony they bear! They are dead, yet they speak; but who listens? The young man sees, listens, and with a laugh turns to his glass. 3. So is it with the horrible evil of licentiousness. We see all around us the haggard ghosts of men who were once respectable, possessed of all that gives grace and symmetry and manhood to men, now but a mass of putrid rottenness. These hideous ghosts, too, tell their warning in vain in the ear of men. If one will not hear these, who come forth from the dens of hell, neither will they be persuaded. He reasons from a wrong principle, from a false knowledge of human nature, who asserts that men would be convinced by the testimony of the dead. 4. Look at the criminal classes. It has been asserted that men have been made worse, instead of better, by observing the punishment of criminals. Christ continually acted upon this knowledge of human nature. When asked for a sign, something occult, He refused, saying no sign but that of Jonah could be given. The story of Jonah teaches simple obedience. In conclusion: The Word is sufficient—1. In its duties. A perfect rule of life. 2. In its motives. 3. In its promises. (*G. F. Kettell, D.D.*)

A spectre would not produce conviction in sinners:—You can hardly imagine it possible that the most hardened of mankind would be proof against warning uttered by a spectral form, coming mysteriously in the stillness of midnight—the form of a friend or a kinsman well remembered, though long ago deceased—which should stand at your bedside, and declare, in unearthly tones, the certain doom of the unrighteous; and when you contrast with the message thus fearfully delivered, the ordinary summons of the gospel, whether as read or preached, you feel it, perhaps, little more than an absurdity to contend that practically there is as much of power in the latter as in the former. Yet we are persuaded—we are certain, that the parable put into the mouth of Abraham may be vindicated by the most cogent yet simple reasoning. Just consider that the effect of a messenger threatening us with punishment unless we repent, depends chiefly on our assurance that it is actually a messenger from God. Now tell me which is the strongest—the evidence which we have that the Bible is God's Word, or that which we could be supposed to have that the grave has given up its tenant, and that the spectre has spoken to us truth? You will hardly say that there is room here for dispute; you will hardly say that man could have a better reason for believing what might be said to him by a departed friend or relation, than he has for believing what is written in the Bible. The evidence that the spectre was commissioned by God, could not surely be greater than that Christ and the apostles were commissioned by God; therefore the man who is not persuaded by Christ and the apostles, might be expected to remain unpersuaded by the spectre. He has no greater amount of evidence to resist; why, then, is he more likely to yield? But you may say, the messenger from the grave may not, indeed, have greater credentials than Christ and His apostles, but those credentials are more forced on the attention; they are more addressed to the senses, and therefore, are more likely to excite repentance. Now this seems very plausible. A man may quite neglect the Bible; he may not study its evidences; and thus, whatever their strength, they must be practically ineffectual. But he cannot be inattentive to the spectre. The shadowy thing stands by him, causing his blood to run cold, and his knees to tremble, and it speaks to him in thrilling accents, to which he cannot, if he would, turn a deaf ear. We admit this, but we cannot admit that the words of the spectre are more likely to make a permanent impression than of a living preacher speaking in the name of God and that of Christ. The spectre speaks to me to-day; addresses itself to my senses, and thus takes, as you think the most effectual mode of producing an impression. But what evidence shall I have to-morrow of the supernatural visitation? There will be nothing but the memory of the occurrence—there will be no witness but my own recollection to which to appeal, and then how easy to suspect that the whole was a delusion! How natural to call in question, whether it has been more than a dream, more than the coinage of a disordered and overwrought mind! I have historical accumulated proof that Christ came forth from the dead, and sent me a message which bids me forsake sin, but I should have no such proofs in regard to the supposed spectre; and, therefore, the almost certainty is that however scared and agitated I might be at the moment when the apparition stood before me, I should soon get rid of the impression! I soon persuade myself that I had been acted on by my own distempered fancy; and, perhaps, laugh at my own credulity. If I can despise Christ, who returned from the dead, though there is given me irrefragable evidence of His return, why should I be expected to give heed to Lazarus, who might indeed come back to me but leave no lasting proof that he

had deserted the grave? No! no! A buried kinsman might come and preach to you, but you would not give heed, if you could be deaf to the voice of Moses and the prophets. You have as good grounds to believe me, while I am now speaking the words of Christ, as you would have if I re-appeared after death, and came, in my grave-clothes, to re-occupy this pulpit. Let it be so. Let there be re-enacted the scene in the cave of the Witch of Endor: "Call me up Samuel," said Saul, to this poor woman, and "an old man cometh up, and he is covered with a mantle—" Call up whom you will; let any minister whom you have been long accustomed to hear, and whose voice has long been silent in death, suddenly re-appear, and assume, for a moment, the office of a teacher, what a fearful silence, what a throbbing of the heart, what terror of the spirit! He speaks in well-known accents; he makes you shudder, and you can scarcely so control your agitation as to listen to his words. But what could he say which you had not already heard? What could he do more than make the attempt to tell you what is delineated in the Bible? You remember the description in the Book of Job of the appearance of the spectre—a description, pronounced by one of the greatest writers in our language, "unequalled in fearful sublimities." It is this: "Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up; it stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes; there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying,"—What did it say? With what marvellous and mighty tidings did this spectre come charged? This is all it said: "Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?" Do we need a ghost to tell us that? do we not know that already? Oh! the spectre might come; but it could tell you nothing to make heaven more attractive, or hell more terrible, than is delineated in the Bible—nothing to make it more certain than it already is, that unless you repent, you shall surely perish. Oh, no; there could be no more powerful truth uttered; no more convincing evidence afforded than now that you are listening to me, who have never entered the invisible world. It would give a solemnity—an awful unearthliness to the ministry if it were conducted by a visitant from the separate state; but the pleasures and the business of life would produce gradually the same effect as now, obliterating the impressions made by the solemn discourse. (*H. Melville, B.D.*)

A common delusion exposed:—It is not necessary that these men should expect some one to rise from the dead in order to be like Dives. That is only an accident of the parable. The true likeness lies here—in thinking that God will deal with us in some new way; in a man's thinking that he may neglect his present means of serving God, and of growing to love Him, and yet that in some way or other, over and above these ordinary means, he shall be interfered for, and that work done in him which is not to be done as things now are. One of the most common forms of this delusion, which lies lurking in the heart of many a man, is to expect that death will do it. Perhaps the man has seen death-beds; and he knows very well that upon a death-bed a man will begin to cry out, and that there will be a sort of show of change sometimes coming from the man's excited feelings at such a time, which is very often nothing more than his trying to deceive himself by putting on an appearance of religion which he can have no more of this world. For the experience of many death-beds has convinced me, as I believe it has convinced many others who attend them, that, so far from the death-bed being the place where you will see the greatest sincerity, there are very few places where you oftener see men hypocrites, very few times and very few places, where men are more desperately striving to deceive themselves, because they feel that now it is almost hopeless to turn. And so the tempter comes to them with this deceit. They dare not look the whole matter in the face; they dare not see that it is everything which needs to be changed within them; and so they go on in a vain show deceiving themselves even to the end. And yet I believe that this is lurking in the heart of very many of us at this moment—"I cannot, so long as common life and its temptations are round about me, I cannot shake off this worldliness; but it will be altogether a different thing when I come to the great reality of a death-bed." Another very common form is, that men believe that old age will do it for them. They say, "My passions are so strong now that I am young; but when I am older, when I have passed through all this burning heat of life, and when I get to that time when everything fades upon the senses, I shall find it comparatively easy to turn then, and then I will turn." And others believe that some sudden sickness will do it, or that some sudden supply of serious thoughts will do it, or that some outward thing or other will convert them, turn them to God, and make it easy for them to begin to live heartily a religious life. Oh! I ask you as reasonable men, do not these deceits abound amongst us?

Have we not people who think, and who do not mind saying to themselves, that it is their children, or their work, or their particular temper, or the people round about them, or the necessity of conforming to this or that evil custom—that it is something accidental which makes them sin, and that when this accident is removed, then they shall begin to serve God in truth and verity? And oh! have we not on every side of us delayers of repentance, and delayers in receiving the communion, and delayers in leading a life of devotion—all hoping still to be better, all thinking that some time or other there will be some alteration in their lives which will make it easy for them to repent, and that then they too shall become saints and be saved? And, even, once more, in those who in the main are leading a life altogether of a different character from this, in those who are striving to serve God, yet are not they too greatly hindered by this self-same temptation? I ask you, have you not too often secretly given way to the difficulties which prevent you from forming habits of earnest prayer, which prevent you from leading a life of greater devotedness and zeal, of greater self-denial and earnestness? Are you not perfectly well aware that you have often given secretly way to the continuance in you of some temptation, which you know to be contrary to God's will, and which you are in a measure striving against, which you do not altogether rule over, which you have not yet cast out, or some evil habit, or some worldly desire or gratification? And yet, how exactly does our Lord's reproof apply to every one of these cases! That reproof is, as I have shown you, that they have proof enough; that they have *the means*, the means which the wisdom of God sees to be fittest, and deems to be sufficient; that what they want is not more help from God, but the using the help they have got; that if they had more help from God, it would only expose them to a greater condemnation, for that those who do not yield to that help which is sufficient, would not yield to any measure of help, and so that the only result of their having more help would be that they would incur greater condemnation by sinning against greater light, and being lost in spite of greater assistance. (*Bishop S. Wilberforce.*)

CHAPTER XVII.

VERS. 1-4. It is impossible but that offences will come.—*Where sin occurs, God cannot wisely prevent it.*—The doctrine of this text is that sin, under the government of God, cannot be prevented. 1. When we say IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PREVENT SIN UNDER THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD, the statement still calls for another inquiry, viz.: Where does this impossibility lie? Which is true: that the sinner cannot possibly forbear to sin, or that God cannot prevent his sinning? The first supposition answers itself, for it could not be sin if it were utterly unavoidable. It might be his misfortune; but nothing could be more unjust than to impute it to him as his crime. Let us, then, consider that God's government over men is moral, and known to be such by every intelligent being. It contemplates mind as having intellect to understand truth, sensibility to appreciate its bearing upon happiness, conscience to judge of the right, and a will to determine a course of voluntary action in view of God's claims. So God governs mind. Not so does He govern matter. The planetary worlds are controlled by quite a different sort of agency. God does not move them in their orbits by motives, but by a physical agency. I said, all men know this government to be moral by their own consciousness. When its precepts and its penalties come before their minds, they are conscious that an appeal is made to their voluntary powers. They are never conscious of any physical agency coercing obedience. Where compulsion begins, moral agency ends. Persuasion brought to bear upon mind, is always such in its nature that it can be resisted. By the very nature of the case, God's creatures must have power to resist any amount of even His persuasion. There can be no power in heaven or earth to coerce the will, as matter is coerced. The nature of mind forbids its possibility. God is infinitely wise. He cannot act unwisely. The supposition would make Him cease to be perfect, and this were equivalent to ceasing to be God. Here, then, is the case. A sinner is about to fall before temptation, or in more correct language, is about to rush into some new sin. God cannot wisely prevent his doing so. Now what shall be done? Shall He let that sinner rush on to his chosen sin

and self-wrought ruin; or shall He step forward, unwisely, sin Himself, and incur all the frightful consequences of such a step? He lets the sinner bear his own responsibility. Thus the impossibility of preventing sin lies not in the sinner, but wholly with God. Sin, it should be remembered, is nothing else than an act of free will, always committed against one's conviction of right. Indeed, if a man did not know that selfishness is sin, it would not be sin in his case. These remarks will suffice to show that sin in every instance of its commission is utterly inexcusable. II. We are next to notice some objections. 1. "If God is infinitely wise and good, why need we pray at all? If He will surely do the best possible thing always, and all the good He can do, why need we pray?" Because His infinite goodness and wisdom enjoin it upon us. 2. Objecting again, you ask why we should pray to God to prevent sin, if He cannot prevent it? We pray for the very purpose of changing the circumstances. If we step forward and offer fervent, effectual prayer, this quite changes the state of the case. 3. Yet further objecting, you ask—"Why did God create moral agents at all if He foresaw that He could not prevent their sinning?" Because He saw that on the whole it was better to do so. Concluding remarks: 1. We may see the only sense in which God could have purposed the existence of sin. It is simply negative. He purposed not to prevent it in any case where it does actually occur. 2. The existence of sin does not prove that it is the necessary means of the greatest good. 3. The human conscience always justifies God. This is an undeniable fact—a fact of universal consciousness. (*C. G. Finney, D.D.*) *The evil and danger of offences*:—1. The first is a time of persecution. Offences will abound in a time of persecution to the ruin of many professors. 2. A time of the abounding of great sins is a time of giving and taking great offence. 3. When there is a decay of Churches, when they grow cold, and are under decays, it is a time of the abounding of offences. Offences are of two sorts. I. SUCH AS ARE TAKEN ONLY, AND NOT GIVEN. The great offence taken was at Jesus Christ Himself. This offence taken, and not given, is increased by the poverty of the Church. These things are an offence taken and not given. II. THERE ARE OFFENCES GIVEN AND TAKEN. 1. Offences given: and they are men's public sins, and the miscarriages of professors that are under vows and obligations to honourable obedience. Men may give offence by errors, and miscarriages in Churches, and by immoralities in their lives. This was in the sin of David; God would pass by everything but offence given: "Because thou hast made My name to be blasphemed," therefore I will deal so and so. So God speaks of the people of Israel: these were My people, by reason of you My name is profaned among the Gentiles. These are the people of the Lord; see now they are come into captivity, what a vile people they are. Such things are an offence given. 2. Offences taken. Now offences are taken two ways. (1) As they occasion grief (*Rom. xiv.*). See that by thy miscarriage thou "grieve not thy brother." Men's offences who are professors, are a grief, trouble, and burden to those who are concerned in the same course of profession. "Offences will come"; and therefore let us remember, that God can sanctify the greatest offences to our humiliation and recovery, and to the saving of our Church. Such is His infinite wisdom. (2) Given offences occasion sin. But offences given are an occasion of sin, even among professors and believers themselves. The worst way whereby a given offence is thus taken, is, when men countenance themselves in private sins by others' public sins; and go on in vices because they see such and such commit greater. Woe unto us if we so take offence. Again, a given offence is taken, when our minds are provoked, exasperated, and carried off from a spirit of love and tenderness towards those that offend, and all others, and when we are discouraged and despond, as though the ways of God would not carry us out. This is to take offence to our disadvantage. I shall give you a few rules from hence, and so conclude. (a) The giving offence being a great aggravation of sin, let this rule lie continually in your hearts, That the more public persons are, the more careful they ought to be that they give no offence either to Jew or Gentile, or to "the Church of Christ." (b) If what I have laid down be your first and your main rule, I doubt where this is neglected there is want of sincerity; but where it is your principal rule, there is nothing but hypocrisy. Men may walk by this rule, and have corrupt minds, and cherish wickedness in their hearts. (c) Be not afraid of the great multiplication of offences at this day in the world. The truths of the gospel and holiness have broke through a thousand times more offences. (d) Beg of God wisdom to manage yourselves under offences: and of all things take heed of that great evil which professors have been very apt to run into; I

mean, to receive and promote reports of offence among themselves, taking hold of the least colour or pretence to report such things as are matter of offence, and give advantage to the world. Take heed of this, it is the design of the devil to load professors with false reports. (*J. Owen, D.D.*) *Of the necessity of offences arising against the gospel*.—I. In the first place, it will be proper to CONSIDER WHAT THE PRINCIPAL OF THOSE OFFENCES ARE WHICH HINDER THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL OF TRUTH. And though everything that is faulty in any kind does in its measure and degree contribute to this evil; yet whoever considers the state of the Christian world, and the history of the Church in all ages from the beginning, will find that the great offences which have all along chiefly hindered the progress of true Christianity, are these which follow. 1. Corruption of doctrine. The Jewish believers, even in the apostles' own times, contended for the necessity of observing the rites and ceremonies of the law of Moses; and this gave just offence to the Gentiles, and deterred them from readily embracing the gospel. After this, other offences arose from among the Gentile converts, who by degrees corrupting themselves after the similitude of the heathen worshippers, introduced saints and images, and pompous ceremonies and grandeur into the Church, instead of true virtue and righteousness of life. 2. The next is divisions, contentions, and animosities among Christians, arising from pride, and from a desire of dominion, and from building matters of an uncertain nature and of human invention upon the foundation of Christ. The great offence, I say, which in all nations and in all ages has hindered the propagation of the gospel of truth, has been a hypocritical zeal to secure by force a fictitious uniformity of opinion, which is indeed impossible in nature; instead of the real Christian unity of sincerity, charity, and mutual forbearance, which is the bond of perfectness. 3. The third and last great offence I shall mention, by which the propagation of true religion is hindered, is the vicious and debauched lives, not of Christians, for that is a contradiction, but of those who for form's sake profess themselves to be so. II. Having thus at large explained what is meant in the text by the word "offences," I proceed in the second place to consider IN WHAT SENSE OUR SAVIOUR MUST BE UNDERSTOOD TO AFFIRM THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE BUT SUCH OFFENCES WILL COME; or, as it is expressed in St. Matthew, that it must "needs be" that offences come. And here there have been some so absurdly unreasonable as to understand this of a proper and natural necessity; as if God had ordained that offences should come, and had accordingly predestinated particular men to commit them. But this is directly charging God with the sins of men, and making Him, not themselves, the author of evil. The plain meaning of our Saviour, when He affirms it to be impossible but that offences will come, is this only—that, considering the state of the world, the number of temptations, the freedom of men's will, the frailty of their nature, the perverseness and obstinacy of their affections; it cannot be expected, it cannot be supposed, it cannot be hoped, but that offences will come; though it be very unreasonable they should come. Men need not, men ought not, to corrupt the doctrine of Christ; they need not dishonour their religion by unchristian heats, contentions, and animosities among themselves; much less is there any necessity that they should live contrary to it, by vicious and debauched practices; and yet, morally speaking, it cannot be but that all these things will happen. III. I proposed to consider in the third place, WHY A PARTICULAR WOE IS, BY WAY OF EMPHASIS AND DISTINCTION, DENOUNCED AGAINST THE PERSONS BY WHOM THESE OFFENCES COME. Thus it appears plainly in general, that the necessity here mentioned of offences coming, is no excuse for those by whose wickedness they come. It is because they are offences of an extensive nature. IV. THE INFERENCES I SHALL DRAW FROM WHAT HAS BEEN SAID, ARE—1. From the explication which has been given of these words of our Saviour—"It is impossible but that offences will come"—we may learn, not to charge God with evil, nor to ascribe to any decree of His the wickedness and impieties of men. 2. Since our Saviour has forewarned us that it must needs be that such offences will come as may prove stumbling-blocks to the weak and inattentive, let us take care, since we have received this warning, not to stumble or be offended at them. 3. And above all, as we ought not to take, so much more ought we to be careful that we never give, any of these offences. (*S. Clarke.*) *On the vitiating influence of the higher upon the lower orders of society*.—If this text were thoroughly pursued into its manifold applications, it would be found to lay a weight of fearful responsibility upon us all. We are here called upon, not to work out our own salvation, but to compute the reflex influence of all our works, and of all our ways, on the principles of others. And when one thinks of the mischief which this influence might spread

around it, even from Christians of chiefest reputation; when one thinks of the readiness of man to take shelter in the example of an acknowledged superior; when one thinks that some inconsistency of ours might seduce another into such an imitation as overbears the reproaches of his own conscience; when one thinks of himself as the source and the centre of a contagion which might bring a blight upon the graces and the prospects of other souls beside his own—surely this is enough to supply him with a reason why, in working out his own personal salvation, he should do it with fear, and with watchfulness, and with much trembling. But we are now upon the ground of a higher and more delicate conscientiousness than is generally to be met with; whereas our object at present is to expose certain of the grosser offences which abound in society, and which spread a most dangerous and ensnaring influence among the individuals who compose it. Let us not forget to urge on every one sharer in this work of moral contamination, that never does the meek and gentle Saviour speak in terms more threatening or more reproachful, than when He speaks of the enormity of such misconduct. There cannot, in truth, be a grosser outrage committed on the order of God's administration, than that which he is in the habit of inflicting. There cannot, surely, be a directer act of rebellion, than that which multiplies the adherents of its own cause, and which swells the hosts of the rebellious. And, before we conclude, let us, if possible, try to rebuke the wealthy out of their unfeeling indifference to the souls of the poor, by the example of the Saviour. (*T. Chalmers, D.D.*) *Our liability to cause others to offend*.—A father tells us how he once started alone to climb a steep and perilous hill, purposely choosing a time when his children were at play, and when he thought that they would not notice his absence. He was climbing a precipitous path when he was startled by hearing a little voice shout, "Father, take the safest path, for I am following you." On looking down, he saw that his little boy had followed him, and was already in danger; and he trembled lest the child's feet should slip before he could get to him, and grasp his warm little hand. "Years have passed since then," he writes, "but though the danger has passed, the little fellow's cry has never left me. It taught me a lesson, the full force of which I had never known before. It showed me the power of our unconscious influence, and I saw the terrible possibility of our leading those around us to ruin, without intending or knowing it; and the lesson I learned that morning I am anxious to impress upon all to whom my words may come." (*Archdeacon Farrar.*) *Cause of offence to the young*.—The owner of the famous Wedgwood potteries, in the beginning of this century, was not only a man of remarkable mechanical skill, but a most devout and reverent Christian. On one occasion, a nobleman of dissolute habits, and an avowed atheist, was going through the works, accompanied by Mr. Wedgwood, and by a young lad who was employed in them, the son of pious parents. Lord C— sought early opportunity to speak contemptuously of religion. The boy at first looked amazed, then listened with interest, and at last burst into a loud, jeering laugh. Mr. Wedgwood made no comment, but soon found occasion to show his guest the process of making a fine vase; how with infinite care the delicate paste was moulded into a shape of rare beauty and fragile texture, how it was painted by skilful artists, and finally passed through the furnace, coming out perfect in form and pure in quality. The nobleman declared his delight, and stretched out his hand for it, but the potter threw it on the ground, shattering it into a thousand pieces. "That was unpardonable carelessness!" said Lord C—, angrily. "I wished to take that cup home for my collection! Nothing can restore it again." "No. You forget, my lord," said Mr. Wedgwood, "that the soul of that lad who has just left us came innocent of impiety into the world; that his parents, friends, all good influences, have been at work during his whole life to make him a vessel fit for the Master's use; that you, with your touch, have undone the work of years. No human hand can bind together again what you have broken." Lord C—, who had never before received a rebuke from an inferior, stared at him in silence; then said, "You are an honest man," frankly holding out his hand. "I never thought of the effect of my words." There is no subject which many young men are more fond of discussing than religion, too often parading the crude, half-comprehended atheistic arguments which they have heard or read before those to whom such doubts are new. Like Lord C—, they "do not think." They do not, probably, believe these arguments themselves, and they forget that they are infusing poison into healthy souls, which no after-efforts of theirs can ever remove. **A moment's carelessness may destroy the work of years.** (*Christian Age.*)

Vers. 5, 6. Increase our faith.—*Increased faith prayed for*:—1. Observe, that faith is susceptible of being increased. 2. There are important reasons why an increase of faith should be desired. (1) An increase of faith is connected with an increase of holiness. (2) The increase of faith is connected with the increase of comfort. (3) The increase of faith is connected with the increase of usefulness. (*The Preachers' Treasury*.) *Prayer for increase of faith*:—I. THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST POSSESS FAITH. There can be no increase where there is no possession. II. AN INCREASE OF FAITH IS POSSIBLE. This will appear from—1. The power and goodness of its Author. 2. The progressive nature of religion. 3. The admonitions of the Bible. 4. The experience of the saints. III. AN INCREASE OF FAITH IS GREATLY TO BE DESIRED. We infer this—1. From its nature. It is a Divine gift, and its existence is attributed to the operation of God (Col. ii. 12). That which God works in us must be desirable: as He is an infinitely good Being, His works must necessarily bear a resemblance to Himself. 2. From its effects. These refer—(1) To our own personal salvation. We are justified by faith—saved by faith—Christ dwells in our hearts by faith—we stand by faith—live by faith—walk by faith—and have boldness of access to God by faith. (2) To the victories we gain over our enemies. By the shield of faith we quench the fiery darts, &c. (Eph. vi. 16). We conquer the world by faith (1 John v. 4). The ancient worthies by faith “subdued kingdoms,” &c. (Heb. xi. 33, 34). (3) To the moral influence of our example. IV. MEANS SHOULD BE USED TO SECURE AN INCREASE OF FAITH. To accomplish this object—1. Study the character of its Author. Meditate on the power, wisdom, and goodness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Think meanly of the Saviour, and you will have little confidence in Him; but think greatly and highly of Him, and you will trust in Him heartily, and believe in Him fully. 2. Get a more extensive acquaintance with the promises of God. 3. Be on your guard against everything that will deaden or damp the ardour of your faith. Carnal company, worldly cares, spiritual supineness, filthy and foolish conversation—all tend to sap the foundation of your faith, and destroy your dependence upon God. In conclusion, we address a word—1. To those who have no faith. 2. To those whose faith has declined. 3. To those whose faith remains in full vigour. (*Theological Sketch-book*.) *Prayer for more faith*:—A prayer adapted to every part of the Christian life. I. CONSIDER THE GENERAL IMPORT OF THE PRAYER: “LORD, INCREASE OUR FAITH.” 1. Faith has respect to revealed truth as its immediate object; and in the New Testament it more especially relates to Christ as the substance of all the promises. 2. In praying for an increase of this principle, the apostles acknowledged that their faith was weak. 3. In praying for more faith, they also acknowledged their own insufficiency to produce it (Eph. ii. 8; Phil. ii. 13). 4. In directing their prayer to Christ, they virtually acknowledge His Divinity. 5. This prayer might in some measure be answered at the time, but was more especially so after our Lord's ascension. II. THE REASONS WHICH RENDER THIS PRAYER SUITABLE TO ALL CHRISTIANS. If we are truly the followers of Christ, yet our faith is weak at best, and needs to be increased, and that for various reasons—1. On account of its influence in obtaining other spiritual blessings, for they are bestowed according to the measure of faith. 2. Its influences under dark and trying providences—Nothing but faith can sustain us under them (Psa. xcvii. 2). 3. Its influence on the deep mysteries of Divine truth, which faith only can receive and apply. 4. The influence of faith on our life and conduct renders this prayer peculiarly suitable and important. 5. Our spiritual enjoyments, as they are derived wholly from the promises, are proportioned to the degree of faith. 6. Its importance in the hour of death renders it unspeakably desirable. (*Ibid.*) *The increase of faith*:—I. THE NATURE OF FAITH. An influential belief in the testimony of God. This necessarily implies in all cases the absence of all indifference and hostility to the truth which is its object, and also a state of heart or moral sensibility which is adapted to receive its appropriate influence. It is easy to see what the character must be, formed by the power of such a principle. Holiness, perfect holiness in man, in all its peace and hopes and joys, is nothing more nor less than the truths of the gospel carried into effect by faith. Let there be the impress of the gospel on the heart and life, and what dignity and perfection of character—what noble superiority to the vanities of the world—what lofty conceptions of God and the things of a future world—what a resemblance to the Son of God would be furnished by such a man! Such is the nature of faith. II. THE MEANS OF ITS EXISTENCE. 1. Prayer. The suppliant at God's throne is surrounded by Divine realities. Nor is there a spot on earth where the tendencies of the heart to depart from God are more effectually

counteracted, and where the soul comes in more direct contact with the objects of faith, than the closet. Prayer directly leads to the mortifying of unbelief in its very root and element, by opening a direct intercourse with heaven. 2. Our faith may be increased by examining the evidence of Divine truth. God always deals with us as intelligent beings. 3. To the same end we must cherish a deep and an abiding sense of the mean and degrading nature of earthly things. 4. Closely connected with this subject is the kindred one of keeping death and eternity continually in view. 5. Another means of increasing faith is its repeated exercise, in retirement and meditation, as well as in the business of life. 6. Important to the same end are just views of the truth and faithfulness of God. God has given to His people exceeding great and precious promises. The only ultimate foundation on which faith can rest in these promises is the unchangeable truth of God. III. CONSIDER THE DESIRABLENESS OF INCREASING OUR FAITH. This appears—1. From the character it gives. All the defects and blemishes of Christian character may be traced to the want or the weakness of faith as their cause. It is through the imperfection of this principle that the character of man is formed so much by the influence of objects that here surround him. Every man is what his object is. 2. From the consolations which faith imparts. It is not only the prerogative of faith that it adds to our peace and our joys in the prosperous scenes of life. Its power is still more triumphant in scenes of affliction and trial. To the eye of faith every event has a tendency and an aim. 3. From the glory for which it prepares. Preparation for the glory that shall hereafter be revealed must be begun in this world. It must be begun in that character, which is the only true appropriate preparation for the services and joys of heaven. If the character be formed here by the exclusive influence of the objects of sense, if all the desires and affections be confined to these, there can be nothing in the world of spirits to meet and satisfy a single desire of the soul. The character, then, must be formed by other objects—the desires and affections of the soul must be fixed on things above—it must thus become capable of heavenly joys, or in vain were it admitted into heaven itself. But it is by faith, and by faith only, that the influence of these Divine and glorious realities can be felt in our present state. (*N. W. Taylor, D.D.*) *The necessity of increased faith:—*I. THE OBJECT OF THE APOSTLES' SOLICITUDE. Their "faith." 1. We ought, my friends, to be extremely careful of our faith—both of its rightness and of its strength, first of all—when we consider the position which faith occupies in salvation. Faith is the salvation-grace. We are not saved by love; but we are saved by grace, and we are saved by faith. We are not saved by courage, we are not saved by patience; but we are saved by faith. That is to say, God gives His salvation to faith and not to any other virtue. 2. Be anxious about your faith, for all your graces hang upon it. Faith is the root-grace; all other virtues and graces spring from it. 3. Take heed of your faith, because Christ thinks much of it. 4. Next, Christian, take good care of thy faith, for recollect faith is the only way whereby thou canst obtain blessings. It is said of Midas, that he had the power to turn everything into gold by the touch of his hand; and it is true of faith—it can turn everything into gold, but destroy faith, we have lost our all; we are miserably poor because we can hold no fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. 5. Next, my friends, take care of your faith perpetually, because of your enemies; for if you do not want faith when you are with friends, you will require it when you have to deal with your foes. Faith has quenched the violence of the flames, shut the mouths of lions, and out of weakness it has made us strong. It has overcome more enemies than the whole host of conquerors. Tell me not of the victories of Wellington; mention not the battles of Napoleon; tell me of what faith has done! Oh! if we should erect a monument to the honour of faith, what various names should we carve on the mighty pedestal! 6. And now for a sixth reason. Take care of your faith, because otherwise you cannot well perform your duty. Faith is the foot of the soul by which it can march along the road of the commandments. Love can make the feet move more swiftly, but faith is the foot which carries the soul. Faith is the oil enabling the wheels of holy devotion and of earnest piety to move well, but without faith the wheels are taken from the chariot, and we drag along heavily. With faith I can do all things, without faith I shall neither have the inclination nor the power to do anything in the service of God. 7. Take care of your faith, my friends, for it is very often so weak that it demands all your attention. II. THE HEART'S DESIRE OF THE APOSTLES. They did not say, "Lord, keep our faith alive: Lord, sustain it as it is at present," but "Increase our faith." For they knew very well

that it is only by increase that the Christian keeps alive at all. Napoleon once said, "I must fight battles, and I must win them; conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me." And it is so with the Christian. It is not yesterday's battle that will save me to-day; I must be going onwards. 1. "Increase our faith" in its extent—the extent of what it will receive. Increase my faith and help me to believe a little more. I believe I have only just begun to learn the A B C of the Scriptures yet, and will constantly cry to the Lord, "Increase my faith," that I may know more and believe more, and understand Thy Word far better. "Increase my faith" in its extent. 2. "Increase my faith" in its intensity. Faith needs to be increased in its power as well as in its extent. We do not wish to act as some do with a river, when they break the banks, to let it spread over the pasture, and so make it shallower; but we wish, while it increases in surface, that it may increase likewise in its depth. III. THE PERSON TO WHOM THE APOSTLES ADDRESSED THEIR PRAYER. The Lord. They went to the right Person. Let us do the same. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

*Praying for an increase of faith:—*I. WE SHOULD USE THIS PRAYER FOR THE INCREASE OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE. Let any Christian examine his own heart and he will see how sadly he needs this, how narrow is the limit of his knowledge of Christ, how circumscribed his views of His love, His sympathy, His compassion, His excellency; how mean his apprehension of His power and majesty and present glory. The excellency of Christ can only be communicated now to the soul by the exercise of faith. II. And not only for the enlargement of spiritual knowledge, but for ESTABLISHMENT IN GRACE as well, should this prayer be used. That we may be established in the simplicity and fulness of the gospel. The fulfilment of this prayer will bring this to pass; it is included in the gift of increased faith. Increase of faith brings clear views of the mercy of the gospel, it corrects the natural uprisings of pride in our hearts, it checks the carnal reasonings of our minds, it convinces of the absolute truth of all that the Bible teaches about our need of the gospel. It will lead to the discovery of error, the detection of sophistry, the avoidance of unscriptural teaching, however specious it may be. III. This prayer should also be used in order THAT OUR PERCEPTION OF SATAN'S TEMPTATIONS MAY BE CLEAR. It is in proportion as our faith is increased, that "we are not ignorant of his devices." (H. M. Baker.) *The increase of faith:—*That "faith" is "a gift of God"—as much a "gift" as any other sovereign act of His power—I need not stay to prove. We have to do this morning with another thought—that the growth and the "increase" of "faith," at every successive stage, is a distinct act of Almighty power. We know, indeed, that everything which is of God has in it essential tendency, nay, an absolute necessity in itself to grow. If you do not wilfully check the grace of God that is in you, that grace will, and must, in obedience to the law of its being, increase. We lay it down, then, as a certainty that "faith" is a thing of degrees. One believer never reaches the same degree in this life as another. Each believer is in different states of belief, at different periods of his own life. St. Paul speaks of a brother who is "weak in the faith"—St. Stephen and St. Barnabas are commended as men "full of faith." But it is easy for us to see traces of "increase of faith" in the lives of the apostles themselves. Have not we seen progress in the mind of the St. Peter in the Gospels and the St. Peter in the Epistles? In St. John also, from the time when he could call fire from heaven, to the hour when he could stand so meekly at the cross's foot? You will see the same in St. Paul's mind if you compare what he says of himself in his Epistles to the Romans and the Corinthians, which were his early Epistles, with his triumphant assurance in his Epistles to Timothy, which were his last Epistles. If, then, "faith" be a thing capable of degrees, every man must be responsible for the measure of his attainment of that grace in the sight of God. There are various "degrees of faith" in the world; but they are all placed in their various degrees with distinct design. It is intended, in the Divine economy of God's Church, that there should be "degrees of faith," to answer His purpose; but that eternal purpose of God is still consistent with man's responsibility in the matter. The various degrees make that beautiful variety, out of which God brings His own unity. They give occasion for kind judgment, and Christian forbearance, and helpfulness one to another, seeing that the man of "much faith" must not despise, but must recognize as a brother, and help on, the man who is said to be a man of "little faith." One man has "faith" sufficient to lead him to entire separation from the world, and to undergo great mortification—another has not got so far. Let the halting, lingering one—the soul that still keeps too much in this world—remember what the apostle says, that it is "faith" which "overcomes the world," and therefore let

him pray, "Lord, increase my faith." One can carry all mysteries, and like mysteries—another loses his "faith" when he comes to mysteries. But he who knows his own heart best, that man knows most how fitting the supplication is, everywhere, "Lord, increase my faith." There are three reasons here why it is important to ask this petition. If any one of you is without any promised blessing of God, it is simply because he has not "faith" about the matter. Again, God has established a direct proportion between a man's faith and a man's success: "according to your faith be it unto you." And, once more, remember, there are degrees in heaven; and, according as we reach here "in faith" we shall reach there "in glory." "Lord, increase our faith!" The man simply says it, and there comes over his mind such a sudden sense of God's amazing love to him, in the redemption of his soul, that everything else looks perfectly insignificant, in the thought of his own acceptance with God. "Lord, increase our faith!"—and we have such communion with things unseen, that death has no power. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*)

The victorious power of faith:—Men are just like the disciples. They hear religion preached; they believe the things that are said; and at times the truth glances through the exterior coating and strikes their moral sense. The ideal of truth presented to them seems beautiful and sweet. In a white light it is to them. Thousands and thousands of men there are who hear the gospel preached every Sunday, and think there is nothing more beautiful than meekness, nothing more beautiful than humility, as they are presented to them. These are excellent qualities in their estimation. They believe in love. They believe in everything that is required in a true Christian character. It meets their approval. Their reason approves it. Their judgment approves it. Their taste approves it. Their moral sentiments approve it. And yet, when they ask themselves, "How shall I practise it?" they fall off instantly, and say, "It is not possible for me. I never can do it in the world." Take gentleness. Here is a great rude-footed, coarse-handed man, gruff and impetuous, and careless of everybody, who sits and hears a discourse on the duty of being gentle; and as the various figures and illustrations are presented, he says, "Oh, how beautiful it is to be gentle!" But the moment he gets out of the church, he thinks, "The idea of my being gentle! I gentle? I gentle? Somebody else must do that part of religion. I never can. It is not my nature to be gentle." Men have an ideal of what is right; and they believe in the possibility of its realization somewhere; but they do not think they are called to that thing. They do not believe it is possible for them. There are avaricious men, I suppose, to whom, on hearing a discourse on benevolence in a church, it really shines, and who say, "Oh, this benevolence, though it is well-nigh impossible—how beautiful it is!" But when it begins to come home to them, and the question is, "Will you, from this time forth, order your life according to the law of benevolence?" they fall off from that and say, "I cannot; it is impossible." And if Christ were present and such men were under the influence of His teaching, they would turn to Him and say, "Lord, if this is true, it is true, and I must conform to it; but you must increase my faith. I must have some higher power. I cannot do it without." And Christ would encourage them, and say (not rebukingly, as it seems in the letter, but very comfortingly), "Do not think it is so hard. It is difficult, but not so difficult as you suppose. Do not think it to be so impossible that I must work a miracle for you before you can accomplish it." If you have faith, if you rouse up those spiritual elements that are in you, if you bring them under the illumination of God's own soul, and they are inspired by the Divine influence, there is that power in you by which you can subdue all your lower nature, and can gain victories over every single appetite and passion, and every single evil inclination and bad habit. Let the better nature in man once more come into communion with God, and it is mightier than the worse nature in man, and can subdue it. You will fail of the secret and real spirit of this passage, if you do not consider its meaning as not only an interpretation, but as an interpretation which is designed to give courage and hope and cheer to those who desire to break away from bad tendencies and traits, and to rise, by a true growth, into the higher forms of Christian experience. Let us consider, then, the practical aspect of this matter. When a strong nature is snatched from worldliness, and begins to live a Christian life, what are the elements of his experience, reduced to some sort of philosophical expression? First, the soul is brought into the conscious presence, and under the recognized power, of the Divine nature. This is with more or less distinctness in different individuals. Consider how men are brought to a religious life. One man has been a very worldly and careless man, until, in the universal whirl of affairs,

a slap of bankruptcy, like the stroke of waves against the side of a ship, smashes into his concerns, and he founders. He saves himself, but all his property goes to the bottom. And there he is, humbled, crushed, mortified. And it is a very solemn thing to him. But he never had any preaching before that gave him such a sense of the unsatisfactoriness of this life. Others come into a religious life by the power of sympathy. They are drawn toward it by personal influence. They go into it because their companions are going in. In a hundred such ways as these God's providence brings people into the beginnings of a Christian life. But when a man has once come into it, his very first experience, usually, whether he be exactly conscious of it or not, is the thought that he is brought into the presence of a higher Being—a higher Spirit—than he has been wont to think was near him. God begins to mean something to him. This sense of God's presence is that which is the beginning of faith in him. It opens the door for the Divine power to inflame his soul; that is, for the Divine mind to give strength and inspiration to the nobler and higher part of his mind—to his reason; to his whole moral nature; to that which is the best and highest in him. By the enlarging, by the education, by the inspiration of a man's nature, in this direction, the beginnings of victory are planted. And now, all the forces of a man's nature, and all the foregoing habits of his life, beginning here, will soon be so changed as to come into agreement with his higher feelings which will be excited by the inshining of God's soul. Men think it is mysterious; but it is not mysterious. Take a person of some degree of sensibility—a young woman, for instance—who has been living in a vicious circle of people. Her father and mother—emigrants—died on landing. She was of good stock, and had strong moral instincts; but she was a vagrant child, and was soon swept into the swirl of poverty and vice. Although too young to become herself vicious, yet she learned to lie, and steal, and swear—with a certain inward compunction—until by and by some kind nature brought her out of the street, and out of the den, and into the asylum. And then, speedily, some childless Christian woman, wanting to adopt a child, sees her, and likes her face and make, and brings her home to her house. This is almost the first time she has had any direct commerce with real truth and real refinement; and at first she has an impulse of gratitude, and admiration, and wonder; and in the main she is inspired by a sense of gladness and of thankfulness to her benefactress. But as she lives from day to day, she does not get over all her bad tendencies. Because she has come to live with and to be the daughter of this woman, she does not get over the love of lying, and tricks, and dirtiness, and meanness; and littleness. The evil does not die in an instant from her nature. Yet there is the beginning of that in her which will by and by overcome it. There is in her a vague, uninterpreted sense of something higher and better than she has known before. And it is all embodied in her benefactress. She hears her sing, and hears her talk, and sees what kindnesses she does to others, and how she denies herself. And if she be, as I have supposed her to be, a child of strong, original moral nature, she will, in the course of a year, be almost free from the taint of corruption; almost free from deceits; almost free from vices. And it will be the expulsive power of new love in her soul that will have driven out all this vermin brood of passions. As long as she is in the presence of this benefactress, she will feel streaming in upon her nature those influences which wake up her higher faculties, and give them power over her lower faculties. When men are brought into the Christian life, and they begin to come into communion with God, the higher part of their nature receives such a stimulus that it has power to dominate the lower part—to control pride; to hold in restraint deceits; to make men gentle, and mild, and sweet, and forgiving, and noble, and ennobling. The direct influence which the spirit of God has upon the human soul, is to develop the good and expel the evil tendencies that are in it. There will be a change in our outward conformities to society; to institutions; to new duties. There will be the acceptance of standards of morality which before we have not accepted. But important as these things are, they are but auxiliaries. There is this one work which the new life begins to accomplish—namely, the readjustment of the forces of the soul. It changes the emphasis. When, therefore, a man enters into a Christian life, not only does he come into communion with God, but his nature is newly directed. He begins to make the upper, the truly spiritual, the love-bearing elements in him dominate over the others. No man can change his faculties, any more than he can change his bodily organization; and yet, his disposition may be changed! The Lord says, "If you have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, you can say to this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the

roots, and cast into the sea." Hard as it is to transplant the tree of your soul, difficult as it is to sever the roots that hold it down, the Master says, "There is power to do it." However many faults you may have, that branch their roots out in every direction, and difficult as it is to transplant them by the ordinary instrumentalities; nevertheless, faith in the soul will give you power to pluck them up by the roots, and cast them from you, or transplant them to better soil, where they will grow to a better purpose. I preach, not simply a free gospel, but a victorious gospel. I preach a gospel that has been full of victories and noble achievements, but that has not yet begun to show what its full power and what all its fruits of victory are to be. No one, then, who has been trying to overcome his faults, need despair. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Prayer for increase of faith:—*

CONSIDER THE INCREASE OF FAITH AS IT REGARDS ITS PRINCIPLE. Faith may, in one respect, be considered as a principle of grace in religion. There is a difference, you know, between the faculties which are natural and a principle of religion—such as faith, or love, or justice, or rectitude. The faculties, of course, would grow spontaneously and naturally, though they may be encumbered by much ignorance and want of tuition; yet that circumstance will not extinguish the faculties, and instruction and tuition cannot raise them above their proper and natural level. This, however, is not the case with religious principle: it may exist or it may not exist, just according to circumstances; and it may exist, unquestionably, in different degrees of vigour and power, in the very same person, under different circumstances and at different periods of life. 1. Faith, as a principle, must have means of existence. But that faith is, in one view of the case, the fruit of teaching, is evident from this single fact—it rests, you know, upon knowledge: and it rests upon knowledge not the growth of the understanding and the judgment in their natural exercise, but knowledge communicated to the soul by the teaching of the Spirit in the revelations of God. Then, if the teaching, brethren, on which faith rests is imperfect, of course the faith itself must be feeble and imperfect. There is one view, indeed, in which the truth on which faith terminates, never can be supposed to be obscure, or little, or imperfect at all, but another in which it may. The first case to which I refer—I mean the first mode of instruction—is that which is communicated simply from the Bible; and the second case to which I refer is that of the ministry. But it is evident that you may have a very clear statement of the truth; it may be fully exhibited—exhibited in all its just proportions, and yet, at the same time, there may be an indisposition on the part of the hearer, or the reader, to receive that truth which is thus proposed. There are two parts here: there is the truth as it is proposed to us, and the recipient of the truth. Now, if the objects of faith are ever so clearly and ever so fully exhibited; if God, in the exercise of His grace and mercy—Christ, in His Divine and atoning character—and you do not receive these truths, it follows that you are destitute of faith; and, if you receive these truths but partially, you can have but a very partial and feeble faith. I think the reason why faith is feeble, in the sense to which I have referred, and from this particular cause, is not so much the fault of the understanding, as the fault of the heart—it is not an intellectual, but it is a moral cause. The Bible does not speak of the head of unbelief wickedly departing from the living God, but it speaks of the heart of unbelief wickedly departing from God. There may be an indisposition in our hearts to receive the truth. Then here is the grand cause, I think, why teaching, which is in itself adequate and perfect and true, produces very little faith through an indisposition on the part of the hearer of the truth to receive it—and its fruits cannot consequently be borne. Faith may be considered as a principle, in another view of the subject, as the fruit and consequence of persuasion and of promise; but then the promise may be imperfectly exhibited to us, or it may be imperfectly entertained by us, and consequently, the faith which rests on promise will be feeble on these accounts. If you seek the fulfilment of the promises of God on any particular point, seeking a fitness in yourselves for their fulfilment, and take your fitness to the promises, you may be assured of this—it will not be accomplished; but if you look to Christ, and His merit, and His intercession, and expect the fulfilment of the promises of God in the fitness of the Saviour's merit, then you may receive those promises in all their fullness. When a mistake, respecting the accomplishment of any promise of God is entertained—respecting the mode of its fulfilment, the mistake generally refers to the sovereignty of God; and we are expecting, I think, from the sovereignty of God just what God expects from our own faith. I do not here speak of faith as a moral fitness; no, but as something else—simple trust in the grace and promised provisions of the gospel. There is a

connection between the fulfilment of the promise on the part of God and the exercise of faith on the part of the sinner. I shall not stop to reason why it is so in the gospel: we find it is there. Our Saviour could not do, in certain circumstances, many mighty works, because of the unbelief of the people: our Saviour cannot do now for us any of those great and mighty works which He hath promised He will do, because of our unbelief. Here is God, in all the fulness and plenitude of His affection—here is the Saviour, in all the infinitude of His merit—here is the promise of life, in all its length and breadth, standing out to our view, exciting our confidence, winning our faith; but, after all, so little is that faith, that we can receive but little; and God cannot, in the sovereignty of His mercy, accomplish what He is infinitely willing to do. Faith, as a principle, in another view of the case, may be considered as the Holy Spirit's influence; but then, that spiritual influence may be but imperfectly submitted to on our part; and if so, then of course our faith will be weak. For, as faith is a religious principle, and a very high religious principle, of difficult exercise and difficult existence, it will follow, that it can only be exercised by the agency and the power of the Spirit of God resting upon the soul. If I could be a believer naturally, I could be a Christian naturally—I could be saved naturally, I could attain to holiness naturally—I could enjoy the highest holiness and felicity naturally. I should not be a dependent creature at all, if I could believe naturally. No; it is by various manifestations and—if you will allow the expression, I use it in an innocent way—various impulses of the Spirit of God on the mind, by which we are led to believe. The power to believe is communicated by spiritual agency and influence; the act of believing is the act of the person who receives that influence. I think that the power of faith may exist, and yet not be exercised, or, if exercised at all, exercised very improperly; just as the power and volition of the limbs are distinct one from the other. I may have the power of volition, and yet I may sit perfectly still at the same time. I may not exercise the power I possess, or I may exercise it. You know there is a difference between a moral agent and a necessary agent. A necessary agent will perform his actions necessarily. The inferior animals, who are destitute of reason, of judgment, of will, of choice, why, of course, they are just what they are by the instincts and impulses of nature, over which they have no control at all. But this cannot be said of man: man, in any circumstances, must be considered a moral agent; therefore the influences of the Spirit of grace are communicated, you will perceive, to aid our infirmities and give us power to believe; but the power may exist, and yet the act may not exist. Is it not true that many minds are visited by the Spirit of God with His illuminations and spiritual influences, and yet faith is never put forth, so to speak, in any saving form? For if saving faith grows out of spiritual influence, it will follow that the presence of that spiritual influence is necessary, in order to the exercise of faith; and one of the great reasons why our faith is so feeble—why we are rather shut up in the darkness of unbelief so often—is, that we do not lay our hearts open to that spiritual influence which is promised and which is vouchsafed to us. "Increase our faith." This is the prayer of the text, that God would increase our faith; and if faith cometh by teaching—cometh from the promise of God—cometh from the spiritual influence, let us receive the teaching simply—let us receive the promise as it is exhibited in the Word—let us lay our hearts open to the influence of the Spirit of God; and that faith which appears a timid, feeble, cowardly thing, in our experience, will grow and increase till it comes to be mighty and powerful. 2. I remark that the exercises of faith may not be equal to the occasion calling for those exercises; and under these circumstances the faith will be felt as feeble, and the person possessing it, as needing influence. Allow me to remark here, that many of the duties of religion are, properly speaking, duties of faith. But the duty depending on us, on the part of religion, or, if you please, on the part of God, may be greater than the faith; and if it be, then, of course, feebleness will be felt on the part of the Christian who has to do the duty. Those duties which I call duties of faith may vary; and, in passing from one class of duties to another, the Christian may feel that his faith and his grace, which were adequate and sufficient for the duties of one state, are found not to be adequate or sufficient for the duties of another state. Now I think this is often felt. For instance, Abraham, the father of the faithful and the friend of God, dwelling in patriarchal simplicity in the bosom of a happy family—in sweet, hallowed, and sublime communion with God, having received the accomplishment of the covenant blessings promised to him at various times and in various circumstances; and Abraham, offering his son Isaac, appears in very diffe-

rent circumstances. The faith which was found sufficient for one circumstance, would not be sufficient for the other. Jacob, dwelling in the land of promise, in the midst of smiling fields, luxuriant corn, bleating flocks, flowing streams, and a smiling sky; and Jacob, dwelling in the midst of famine, in the death of his flocks, in the loss of Joseph his son, would be a man in very different circumstances. The faith which would support Jacob's mind when his family was entire and happy would scarcely support Jacob's mind when his favourite son was gone. Is it not just so now? Here is the Christian youth, living in the bosom of his family, cheered on in his piety by the advice, counsels, and prayers of his parents, all zealous to make him happy, to make him secure, to make him useful, to make him honourable; and the Christian youth goes out into the world, to meet its buffetings, its toils, its anxieties, its frowns. There is a great difference between that youth dwelling in the bosom of a happy family, and that man in the midst of the blighting crosses of the world. The patience which would preserve that youth, scarcely will preserve that man; the faith which would soothe and make his soul happy in favourable circumstances, will scarcely make him happy in the midst of unfavourable. And submissiveness to the crosses of life must be sustained by faith; but the burden, you know, may be greater than the faith, and if it is found to be so, whatever our strength may be in other circumstances, still you will find yourselves feeble then. I think there is more difficulty—much more difficulty—in attaining to a quiet, resigned, patient spirit, in the midst of the troubles of life, than there is in the discharge of the active duties of life. The faith which enables a man to pass the common road of life in peace and happiness will scarcely be sufficient to enable him to pass the valley and shadow of death without fear. We must feel the touch of affliction, and the touch of death; and, perhaps, the prayer of the text may be very appropriate to us when we change circumstances, and we may have to pray, "Lord, increase our faith!" 3. And let me, thirdly and finally, remark that the accidents to which our religious feelings and experience may be exposed, in this state of probation and trial, may tend to weaken faith, and make the prayer of the text necessary—"Lord, increase our faith!" The privilege of justification may not be forfeited by the loss, we think, of many of its attendant and accompanying privileges and joys. A man may retain his acceptance with God, and yet he may lose very much of that comfort, peace, joy, love, and those excesses of feelings which he enjoyed before; for all these blessings flow from God, and are immutable, in that respect, above all accident; yet, let it be remembered, that the recipient of the whole is the human heart; and if these blessings are to dwell in a sorrowful soul, they will receive some tint, some colouring, I think, from the character of the soul receiving them. Now the difficulty of attaining confidence in God, in the decay of our spiritual joys, will be evident from this fact. There will be a great difficulty in maintaining that kind of faith in the promised provisions of the grace and love of God, the death of Christ, and so on, necessary even to preserve and keep the soul in spiritual life. Now, I say, the difficulty of maintaining a firm, unshaken trust in God, in the midst of this wreck, though necessary, is very difficult. How often is it that the Christian feels like a timid seaman, when the ship in which he first sails begins to rock, and the elements to howl, and the waves to dash! Fears arise, though the storm makes it necessary that he should have more confidence, more courage, fortitude, calmness, than before. Yet so it is with Christian life. It is extremely difficult to maintain confidence in the midst of the storm, though that confidence is more necessary, and I dare say you will feel the necessity of offering the prayer of the text, "Lord, increase our faith!" (*J. Dizon, D.D.*)

Increased faith the strength of peace principles:—It was not for the sake of working miracles that the apostles sought increased faith; it was not in order to bear their present or future trials; neither was it to enable them to receive some mysterious article of the faith; but their prayer referred to a common everyday duty enjoined by the gospel—the forgiving those who do us wrong. 1. Let us consider THE PRAYER ITSELF. Notice what this prayer confesses. 1. It confesses that they had faith. 2. It confesses that while they had faith, they had not enough of it. 3. That they could not increase their own faith. 4. That the Lord Jesus can increase faith. II. I want to show how THE INCREASE OF FAITH BEARS UPON OUR POWER TO FORGIVE OTHERS. 1. Faith increases our confidence in Jesus, so that we shall not suspect Him of setting us an impracticable task. 2. Between faith and forgiveness a very close connection will be seen if we inquire what is the foundation of faith. The mercy of God. 3. The joy of faith is a wonderful help to forgiveness. 4. A spirit of rest is created by faith, which greatly aids the gentle spirit. 5. Faith,

when it is strong, has a high expectancy about it, which helps it to bear with the assaults of men of the world. A man readily puts up with the inconvenience of the present, when he has great joys in store for the future. III. Notice how the Lord JESUS CHRIST ANSWERED THE PRAYER FOR INCREASED FAITH. 1. By assuring them that faith can do anything. 2. By teaching them humility. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *An increase of faith:—I. WE PRAY FOR AN INCREASE OF FAITH ALSO THAT ITS OBJECT MAY BECOME MORE REAL.* We hold spiritual things too loosely. II. *AN INCREASE OF FAITH WILL MAKE THE GOSPEL A GREATER POWER IN OUR LIFE.* We are tried by various circumstances, and tempted by the world, the flesh, and the devil. When we see Abraham on Moriah, Job on the top of the heap, Hezekiah on a bed of sickness, Jeremiah in the dungeon, the three Hebrew youths before Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel in the den, Paul fighting with wild beasts at Ephesus, and the martyrs in the flames, faith demonstrates the power and grace of God. Has it occurred to you that trials and temptations are the best occasions to show Christ to the world? In the instances we have named, as well as in thousands of others, God's glory shone brighter than in the temple strain, or the worship of the synagogue. III. *WE NEED A STRONGER FAITH TO PREPARE US FOR THE UNKNOWN FUTURE.* (*The Weekly Pulpit.*) *Only God can increase faith:—*Faith is not a weed to grow upon every dunghill, without care or culture: it is a plant of heavenly growth, and requires Divine watching and watering. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 6. *Faith as a grain of mustard seed.—The force of faith:—*We must not imagine that these words give any encouragement to an idle and childish expectation of any startling and ostentatious outcome of a true faith in Jesus Christ; as though God's grace could ever be used to win for any one the wonder and admiration of His fellow-men, or displayed in any abrupt and fruitless miracle, for our excitement or aggrandizement. It is a far higher and nobler power which is really promised by our Lord even to the least measure of true faith in Him: a power which is far more fruitful and more mysterious than the mere working of a wonder which would only be like a conjuring trick on a large scale. For what He really here teaches us, as though in a short and vivid parable, is this: that since His coming upon earth, there is a new kind of force astir in the history and in the souls of men—a force which in the speed and certainty of its action can surpass all the ordinary means by which men scheme and work—a force which is effective far beyond all likelihood that we can see in it, so that even its least germ is able to achieve results of inconceivable difficulty and greatness: and for the secret, the character, of this new force He points us to the one spring and motive of the Christian life—to faith. Now, before we leave the outward form in which this truth is taught us, let us notice one point in it: that it is to a seed that our Lord compares the beginning of faith in a man's heart: to a grain of mustard seed: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown it is the greatest amongst herbs, and becometh a tree, &c. He seems thus to teach us that all true faith is ever and everywhere growing: not a dead, self-contained thing, but a seed, filled with an almost infinite power of growth in strength and range and beauty. However poor and mean and worthless it may seem, there is that in it which will in due time and with due care force its way into the light and strive towards heaven itself, till the little speck of hope becomes a branching, fruitful wealth of life and beauty, a resting-place and shelter for those who hover round its boughs and find refreshment and protection in its gentle strength. Now I ask you to consider whether we ever meet with any character which does thus seem to escape from the ordinary restrictions of cause and effect: to exert a force far beyond all the likelihood that we can discover: and to achieve results which sober and practical men would never have expected from it? Is there any temper of mind and will which makes a way through insuperable obstacles, and forces mountainous difficulties to yield it service and obedience? Well, in the first place, do we not see a strange foreshadowing of such supernatural effectiveness, and a wonderful contrast between what might reasonably have been looked for and what is actually achieved, in the life and work of men who have a large degree of faith in themselves? Do we not see in what we know of history and politics, and in our own experience too, that the men who do great deeds, who leave a mark behind them, who bend stubborn circumstances to their will, who influence other men (bearing into their hearts the passions or the policy which they have themselves conceived), are always the men who have a firm faith in their own judgment, and a resolute conviction that they will achieve what they have set themselves to do: so that they are not always explaining and apolo-

gizing and qualifying and standing on the defensive, but rather going straight forward and fearlessly calling upon others to follow them? But, secondly, there is a nearer reflection of that which the text means, and a higher and more mysterious efficacy, in the power which some can wield by faith in their fellow-men. I trust we all know something of the stange influence by which some men seem able to discover and draw out and strengthen all that is good and hopeful in those with whom they have to do. The change which is wrought by one who meets his fellows with a simple, earnest trust and hope is just the contrary of that miserable atmosphere of dingy mist and cold in which a cynic lives and thinks and acts: distrusting and depreciating others till they cease to show him anything but those meaner, harsher elements in their character which he seems resolute and glad to find. There can hardly be a happier or more fruitful and wonder-working life than his in whose company men are always stirred to brightness and unselfishness just because he always believes that they are purer and better than they are: by whose trustful expectation they are reminded of what they once desired and hoped to be, so that the long-forgotten ideal seems again to come within their reach, and they live, if only for a while, by a light which they never thought to see again. For thus this quickening and enlightening power of faith in our fellow-men changes the whole air and aspect of a life: and he who is thus trustful and hopeful draws out in one man the timid and hidden germ of good, and engenders in another the grace and warmth which his faith presumes; and the dullest heart is startled into sympathy with the charity which believeth all things, and hopeth all things: so that everywhere this faith is greeted by the brightness which itself calls out, as the sun is welcomed by the glad colours which sleep until he comes. (F. Paget, D.D.)

Vers. 7-10. But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle.—*The ploughing servant*:—The one thing on which our Lord wishes to concentrate our attention is not the spirit in which God deals with His servants, but rather the spirit in which we should serve God—not what God thinks of our work, but rather how we should regard it ourselves. The Christian belongs to God; therefore God has a right to all the service he can render. And, when he has rendered it all, he may not indulge in self-complacency as if he had done anything extraordinary, or had deserved any special commendation; for even at the best he has done no more than he ought to have done, since soul, body, and spirit, in all places and in all cases, everywhere and at all times, he is the property of God. I. THE CONTINUOUS OBLIGATION OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. The Christian's "day" is not one merely of twelve hours; but throughout the twenty-four he must be ready for any emergency, and must meet that at the moment when it rises. Always he is under obligation to his Lord; and "without haste," but also "without rest," he must hold himself absolutely at the disposal of his Master. All his time is his Lord's; he can never have "a day off." He is to be always waiting and watching until death. II. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH SUCH DEMANDS OUGHT TO BE MET BY US. 1. We must meet them with patience. No murmuring or whimpering over our lot, as if it were tremendously hard, and as if we were undergoing a species of martyrdom. 2. And then, on the other side, we are not to stroke ourselves down complacently after we have met the demand upon us, as if we had done something extraordinary. Pride after toil is just as much out of place here as murmuring under toil. 3. We are not to think about ourselves at all, but of God, of what He has been to us and what He has done for us, and of what we owe to Him; and then, when we get to a right and proper estimate of that, our most arduous efforts and our most costly sacrifices will seem so small in comparison, that we shall be ready to exclaim, "We are unprofitable servants! All that we have done does not begin to measure the greatness of our indebtedness to Him for whom we have done it!" 4. Thus, in order to comply with the exactions of the Christian life, in the spirit which this parable recommends, we have to become reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. It is the sense of redemption and the consciousness of regeneration whereby we have become no longer servants, but sons, alone, that will impel us to reckon ourselves as not our own, and to do without a murmur, and without the least self-complacency, all that God requires at our hands. When the life of a beloved son is hanging in the balance, no one can persuade his mother to take rest. You may tell her that others are watching, that everything is being done that can be done, that it is her "duty" to take a respite; but you might as well speak to the deaf, for she is his mother, and her mother-love will not let her be content with less than her own personal ministry to her boy. But does she think then of doing merely her duty

to him? Is she measuring her conduct then by any standard of rectitude? Nothing of the kind! She has risen above all standards and all duty. So with ourselves and the service of God. Love lifts us above legalism. (*W. M. Taylor, L.D.*) *The parable of the unprofitable servant*.—I. THE NATURE OF THE SERVICE GOD REQUIRES. That we do His bidding. 1. This He has revealed in His Word. 2. For this He has given us the capacity and powers which are essential. The obedience He claims must possess the following characteristics. (1) It must be the obedience of love. (2) It must be spiritual. (3) It must have respect to all His commandments. (4) It must be constant. (5) It must be persevering fidelity unto death. II. THE SUPPORT HE GIVES IN IT. This is implied in His sitting down to "eat and drink" (vers. 7, 8). Notice—1. God gives ability for the service. 2. He provides daily food for the soul. 3. He gives satisfaction and peace in the service. III. THE DIVINE INDEPENDENCY WITH RESPECT TO THIS SERVICE. Doth the master "thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded," &c. (ver. 9)? Now the force of this will be seen when it is remembered—1. That no man can go beyond the Divine claims in his obedience. 2. God's goodness to man is ever beyond the services He receives from him. 3. That man's best services are, in consequence of his infirmities, frail and imperfect. Learn—1. How necessary is humility even to the most exalted saints. 2. In all our obedience, let us set the glory of God before us. 3. Those who refuse to obey the Lord must finally perish. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *Extra service*.—Are these indeed the words of Him who said, "Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends"? This is a picture of a hard, unlovely side of life—a slave's life and a slave's service, without thanks or claim for thanks. We ask, I repeat, and not unnaturally, where such a representation of Christian service fits into that sweet and attractive ideal which Christ elsewhere gives us under the figure of the family relation—sons of God, confidential friends of Christ. We hasten to say, No; but it will require a little study to discover why we may say no, and to fix the place of this parable in relation to others of a happier tone. 1. Observe, in the first place, that it is not unusual for our Lord to draw a disagreeable picture in order to set forth His own love and grace. [Unjust judge. Churlish man refusing bread to neighbour.] We must not be repelled by a figure, therefore. Let us try to see what facts and conditions of Christian service are intended to be expressed by this parable. The parable answers to the fact in being a picture of hard work, and of what we call extra work. The service of God's kingdom is laborious service—service crowded with work and burdens. Christ nowhere represents it as easy. No Christian can shut himself up to a little routine of duty, and say, I will do so much, within such times, and no more. So long as a man's work is merely the carrying out of another's orders, it will tend to be mechanical and methodical: but the moment the man becomes identified in spirit with his work; the moment the work becomes the evolution of an idea, the expression of a definite and cherished purpose; the moment it becomes the instrument of individual will, sympathy, affection; above all, the moment it takes on the character of a passion or an enthusiasm—that moment it overleaps mechanical trammels. The lawyer is not counting the number of hours which duty compels him to work. He would make each day forty-eight hours long if he could. He has a case to gain, and that is all he thinks of. The physician who should refuse to answer a summons from his bed at the dead of night, or to visit a patient after a certain hour of the day, would soon have abundance of leisure. Pain will not measure its intervals by the clock, fever will not suspend its burning heats to give the weary watcher rest: the affliction of the fatherless and widow knocks at the doors of pure and undefiled religion at untimely hours. Times and seasons, in short, must be swallowed up in the purpose of saving life and relieving misery. I need not carry the illustrations farther. You see that the lower a type of service, the more mechanical and methodical it is; and that the higher types of service develop a certain exuberance, and refuse to be limited by times and seasons. 2. A second point at which the fact answers to the parable, is the matter of wages; that is to say, the slave and the servant of Christ have neither of them any right to thanks or compensation. What God may do for His servants out of His own free grace and love, what privileges He may grant His friends, is another question; but, on the hard business basis of value received, the servant of God has no case. What he does in God's service it is his duty to do. "God," as Bengal remarks, "can do without our usefulness." God has no necessary men. 3. Now, then, we reach the pith of the parable. It is spoken from the slave's point of view; it deals with service of the lower, mechanical type. Now the moment a man puts himself

on that lower ground, and begins to measure out his times and degrees of service, and to reckon what is due to himself, that moment he runs sharply against this parable. That moment Christ meets his assertion of his rights with this unlovely picture. The parable says to him, in effect, "If you put the matter on the business basis, on the ground of your rights and merits, I meet you on that ground, and challenge you to make good your claim. I made you: I redeemed you, body and soul, with My own blood. Everything you have or are, you owe to My free grace. What are your rights? What is your ground for refusing any claim I may see fit to make upon you? What claim have you for thanks for any service you may render Me at any time?" And the man cannot complain of this answer. It is indeed the master's answer to a slave; but then, the man has put himself on the slave's ground. To the servile spirit Christ asserts His masterdom. He has no word of thanks for the grumbling slave who grudges the service at his table after the day's ploughing; but to the loving disciple—the friend to whom His service is joy and reward enough, and who puts self and all its belongings at his disposal—it is strange, wondrous strange, but true, nevertheless, that Christ somehow slips into the servant's place. Strange, I repeat; but here is Christ's own word for it: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning." Here is a picture of night-work, you see. "And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." Here are the servants, weary, no doubt, with the day's work, but waiting and watching far into the hours of rest for their master, and flying with cheerful readiness to the door at his first knock. What then? "Blessed are those servants, whom the master when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." The amount of the matter is, that for him who gives himself without reserve to Christ's service, Christ puts Himself at his service. When he accepts Christ's right over him with his whole heart, not as a sentence to servitude, but as his dearest privilege, counting it above all price to be bought and owned by such a Master, he finds himself a possessor as well as a possession. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's." (*M. R. Vincent, D.D.*)

The Christian's obligation to God:—The instruction of this parable supposes—I. THAT THE MASTER HERE DESCRIBED IS THE HEAVENLY LORD AND MASTER OF US ALL—THE GOD THAT MADE US AND THE REDEEMER THAT DIED FOR US. II. THE SERVICES WHICH WE ARE TO RENDER TO THIS DIVINE LORD. 1. The text takes it for granted that we are engaged spontaneously and habitually in serving this great Master according to our several stations in His household. 2. But besides this there is a further idea in the service described in the parable—that of duties succeeding each other without intermission. 3. The text also conveys the idea that the good servant postpones personal ease or indulgence to his master's command and interest. III. THE LOW ESTIMATE WHICH THE CHRISTIAN FORMS OF HIMSELF AFTER ALL HE HAS DONE OR CAN DO FOR HIS HEAVENLY LORD. Doth your goodness extend to the infinite Creator? Do your minute services at all weigh in the view of the infinite fulness of eternal glory, and the majesty of Him that sits upon the circle of the heavens? (*D. Wilson, M. A.*)

The spirit of a true servant of God:—"People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of a great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own blest reward in healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and a bright hope of a glorious destiny hereafter? Away with the word in such a view and with such a thought! It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say, rather, it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering, or danger, now and then, with a foregoing of the common conveniences and charities of this life, may make us pause, and cause the spirit to waver, and the soul to sink; but let this be only for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall hereafter be revealed in and for us. I never made a sacrifice. Of this we ought not to talk, when we remember the great sacrifice which He made who left His Father's throne on high to give Himself for us." (*Dr. Livingstone.*)

The dutiful servant:—We used to be roused and stirred by the clarion call of duty, as well as soothed and comforted by the tender breathings of love. And here the call comes to us loud and clear, waxing even louder as we listen and reflect. "Do your duty; and when you have done it, however laborious and painful it may be, remember that you have *only* done your duty. Do not give yourselves airs of complacency, as though you had achieved some great thing. Do not give yourselves air of martyrdom as though some strange thing had happened

to you. Neither pity yourselves, nor plume yourselves on what you have done or borne. Do not think of yourselves at all, but of God, and of the duties you owe to Him. That you have done your duty—let this be your comfort, if at least you can honestly take it. And if you are tempted to a dainty and effeminate self-pity for the hardships you have borne, or to a dangerous and degrading self-admiration for the achievements you have wrought, let this be your safeguard, that you have done no more than your duty." It is in this strain that our Lord speaks to us here. 1. And is it not a most wholesome and invigorating strain, a strain to which all in us that is worthy of the name of man instantly and strongly responds? The very moment we grow complacent over our work, our work spoils in our hands. Our energies relax. We begin to think of ourselves instead of our work, of the wonders we have achieved instead of the toils which yet lie before us and of how we may best discharge them. So soon as we begin to complain of our lot and task, to murmur as though our burden were too heavy, or as though we were called to bear it in our own strength, we unfit ourselves for it, our nerves and courage give way; our task looks even more formidable than it is, and we become incapable even of the little which, but for our repugnances and fears, we should be quite competent to do. 2. And then how bracing is the sense of duty discharged, if only we may indulge in it. And we may indulge in it. Does not Christ Himself teach us to say, "We have done that which it was our duty to do"? He does not account of our duty as we sometimes account of it. If we are at work in His fields, He does not demand of us that we should plough so many acres, or that we should tend so many heads of cattle. All that He demands of us is that, with such capacities and opportunities as we have, we should do our best, or at lowest *try* to do it. Honesty of intention, purity and sincerity of motive, the diligence and cheerfulness with which we address ourselves to His service, count for more with Him than the mere amount of work we get through. The faithful and industrious servant is approved by Him, however feeble his powers, however limited his scope. And He would have us take pleasure in the industry and fidelity which please Him. He would have us account, as He Himself accounts, that we *have* done our duty when we have sincerely and earnestly endeavoured to do it. 3. We need not fear to adapt any part of this parable to our own use, if only we take to ourselves the parable as a whole. For, in that case, we shall not only add, "We are unprofitable servants," so often as we say, "We have done that which it was our duty to do"; we shall also confess that every moment brings a fresh duty. We shall not rest when one duty is discharged, as though our service had come to an end; we shall be content to pass from duty to duty, to *fill* the day of life with labour to its very close. We shall not be content only, but proud and glad, to wait at our Master's table *after* we have ploughed the soil and fed the cattle. And even when at last we eat and drink, we shall do even that to His glory—eating our bread with gladness and singleness of heart, not for enjoyment alone, but that we may gain new strength for serving Him. (S. Cox, D.D.) We are unprofitable servants.—*The inevitable imperfectness of human works*:—Life is a work, a service. Our best works are but faulty. This consideration ought—I. To LEAD US TO HUMBLING VIEWS OF ALL OUR WORK. II. To GUARD US FROM DISCOURAGEMENT IN VIEW OF THE FELT FAULTINESS OF OUR SERVICE. III. To PREVENT US FROM TOO GREAT CONFIDENCE IN THE MERIT OF OUR PERFORMANCES. IV. To STIMULATE US TO DILIGENCE, SEEING THAT WHEN WE HAVE DONE THE UTMOST OUR WORK IS YET BUT IMPERFECT. Mark the great claims upon us for labour. 1. From the great Master of all, the doing of whose will is necessary for the welfare of His entire household. 2. From the world, in order to promote its benefit by our culture, instruction, and example. 3. From our own life, that its best interests and happiness may be secured. (Anon.) *The Scripture-doctrine of the unprofitableness of man's best performances, an argument against spiritual pride*: yet no excuse for slackness in good works and Christian obedience:—I. I propose to explain WHAT THE PHRASE OR TITLE OF UNPROFITABLE SERVANTS HERE STRICTLY MEANS. II. I proceed now, secondly, to consider HOW MUCH IT CONCERNS, AND HOW FITLY IT BECOMES, SUCH UNPROFITABLE SERVANTS TO MAKE THEIR HUMBLE ACKNOWLEDGMENTS BEFORE GOD, OF THE WORTHLESSNESS OF ALL THEIR SERVICES; worthless, I mean, with respect to God, not otherwise: for they are not worthless with respect to angels, or to other men; more especially not to our own souls, but that, by the way, only to prevent mistakes. III. I proceed now, thirdly and lastly, to observe, THAT SUCH HUMBLE ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AS I HAVE BEEN HERE MENTIONING, MUST NOT HOWEVER BE SO UNDERSTOOD AS TO AFFORD ANY EXCUSE OR COLOUR FOR SLACKNESS IN OUR BODILY DUTIES; or for pleading any exemption or discharge from true Christian obedience. (D.

Waterland, D.D.) *Reliance on religious observances* :—Now of course there is a danger of persons becoming self-satisfied, in being regular and exemplary in devotional exercises; there is danger, which others have not, of their so attending to them as to forget that they have other duties to attend to. I mean the danger, of which I was just now speaking, of having their attention drawn off from other duties by their very attention to this duty in particular. And what is still more likely of all, persons who are regular in their devotions may be visited with passing thoughts every now and then, that they are thereby better than other people; and these occasional thoughts may secretly tend to make them self-satisfied, without their being aware of it, till they have a latent habit of self-conceit and contempt of others. What is done steadily forces itself upon the mind, impresses the memory and imagination, and seems to be a substitute for other duties; and what is contained in definite outward acts has a completeness and tangible form about it, which is likely to satisfy the mind. However, I do not think, after all, that there is any very great danger to a serious mind in the frequent use of these great privileges. Indeed, it were a strange thing to say that the simple performance of what God has told us to do can do harm to any but those who have not the love of God in their hearts, and to such persons all things are harmful: they pervert everything into evil.

1. Now, first, the evil in question (supposing it to exist) is singularly adapted to be its own corrective. It can only do us injury when we do not know its existence. When a man knows and feels the intrusion of self-satisfied and self-complacent thoughts, here is something at once to humble him and destroy that complacency. To know of a weakness is always humbling; now humility is the very grace needed here. Knowledge of our indolence does not encourage us to exertion, but induces despondence; but to know we are self-satisfied is a direct blow to self-satisfaction. There is no satisfaction in perceiving that we are self-satisfied. Here then is one great safeguard against our priding ourselves on our observances.

2. But again, if religious persons are troubled with proud thoughts about their own excellence and strictness, I think it is only when they are young in their religion, and that the trial will wear off; and that for many reasons. Satisfaction with our own doings, as I have said, arises from fixing the mind on some one part of our duty, instead of attempting the whole of it. In proportion as we narrow the field of our duties, we become able to compass them. Men who pursue only this duty or only on that duty, are in danger of self-righteousness; zealots, bigots, devotees, men of the world, sectarians, are for this reason self-righteous. For the same reason, persons beginning a religious course are self-righteous, though they often think themselves just the reverse. They consider, perhaps, all religion to lie in confessing themselves sinners, and having warm feelings concerning their redemption and justification—and all because they have so very contracted a notion of the range of God's commandments, of the rounds of that ladder which reaches from earth to heaven. But the remedy of the evil is obvious, and one which, since it will surely be applied by every religious person, because he is religious, will, under God's grace, effect in no long time a cure. Try to do your *whole* duty, and you will soon cease to be well-pleased with your religious state.

3. But this is not all. Certainly this objection, that devotional practices, such as prayer, fasting, and communicating, tend to self-righteousness, is the objection of those, or at least is just what the objection of those would be, who never attempted them. When, then, an objector fears lest such observances should make him self-righteous, were he to attempt them, I do think he is over-anxious, over-confident in his own power to fulfil them; he trusts too much in his own strength already, and, depend on it, to attempt them would make him less self-righteous, not more so. He need not be so very fearful of being too good; he may assure himself that the smallest of his Lord's commandments are to a spiritual mind solemn, arduous, and inexhaustible. Is it an easy thing to pray? And so again of austerities; there may be persons so constituted by nature as to take pleasure in mortifications for their own sake, and to be able to practise them adequately; and they certainly are in danger of practising them for their own sakes, not through faith, and of becoming spiritually proud in consequence: but surely it is idle to speak of this as an ordinary danger. And so again a religious mind has a perpetual source of humiliation from this consciousness also, viz., how far his actual conduct in the world falls short of the profession which his devotional observances involve.

4. But, after all, what is this shrinking from responsibility, which fears to be obedient lest it should fail, but cowardice and ingratitude? What is it but the very conduct of the Israelites, who, when Almighty God bade them encounter their enemies and so gain Canaan, feared the

sons of Anak, because they were giants? To fear to do our duty lest we should become self-righteous in doing it, is to be wiser than God; it is to distrust Him; it is to do and to feel like the unprofitable servant who hid his lord's talent, and then laid the charge of his sloth on his lord, as being a hard and austere man. At best we are unprofitable servants when we have done all; but if we are but unprofitable when we do our best to be profitable, what are we, when we fear to do our best, but unworthy to be His servants at all? No! to fear the consequences of obedience is to be worldly-wise, and to go by reason when we are bid go by faith. (*J. H. Newman, D.D.*)

Unprofitable servants.—A sentence which requires thought. At first sight we might be inclined to say, "If a servant does all which he is deputed to do, can that servant in any way be an unprofitable servant?" But look at the matter a little more closely, and see how the balance lies. All service is a covenant between two parties. The servant covenants to do certain works, and the employer covenants to provide for his servant certain wages, food, and accommodation. If the agreement be a just one, and if both do their duty according to the agreement, neither can truly say he is a gainer or a loser in respect of the other. What the servant gives in work he receives back in money, food, and accommodation. What the master pays he receives back in the benefit and comfort which he derives from the servant's work. Each gets back what he gave; his own in another shape. But how is it between a man and his Creator? Let me for a moment suppose a case—quite impossible I fear—but the case of a man who has fulfilled all the ends for which he was created. How does the case now stand? God has endowed that man with life, and all its powers of body, mind, and soul; with all its influences and opportunities; and God has watched over him and kept him and blessed him. Now if that man be a kind and useful man to all his fellow-creatures with whom he has to do, and if he uses rightly all his possessions, and if he honours God and loves his neighbour, that man has done his duty. But is God the gainer? He has only received back His own. It is all His own property, His gift; it is but His right. The creature hath done his duty; but the Creator has not benefitted. How can a man be "profitable" to his Creator? But "profit" is to have your own back with increase; and if that be profit, there is no profit here. The man is still, in reference to his master, "an unprofitable servant." Now let us look at it as a matter of fact. So far are we, even the best of us, from having "done all these things" which are commanded of us, and so fulfilled our duty, that the question is, Have we really kept any *one* single commandment that God ever gave? Or put it in another way, in which Christ placed it, Is there a person in the world to whom your conscience will tell you that you have really done your whole duty in everything? (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*)

The defects of our performances an argument against presumption.—I. THE UTMOST WE CAN DO IS NO MORE THAN OUR BOUNDEN DUTY. Our creation places us under a debt which our most accurate services can never discharge. Alas! all we do, or all we can suffer in obedience to Him, can bear no proportion to what He has done and suffered for us. And if our best services cannot discount His past favours, much less can we plead them in demand of His future. And therefore whatever farther encouragement He is pleased to annex to our obedience, must be acknowledged as a pure act of grace and bounty. II. AFTER WE HAVE DONE ALL, WE ARE UNPROFITABLE. God is a being infinitely happy in the enjoyment of His own perfections, and needs no foreign assistance to complete His fruitions. No—our observance of His commands, though by His infinite mercy it be a means of advancing our own, is yet no addition to His felicity, which is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and consequently our most dutiful performances cannot lay any obligation of debt on our Creator, or presume upon any intrinsic value which His justice or gratitude is bound to reward. III. THE PERFORMANCE ITSELF CANNOT BE INSISTED ON AS AN ACT STRICTLY OUR OWN, BUT MUST BE ASCRIBED TO THE ASSISTANCE OF DIVINE GRACE WORKING IN US; and that all the value of it is derived from the mediation and atonement of Christ. It is His Holy Spirit that kindles devotion in our breast, infuses into us good desires, and enables us to execute our pious resolutions. This single reflection should, methinks, be sufficient to subdue every high and insolent conceit of our own righteousness, that in our best performances to God we give Him but of His own, and that even our inclination and ability to serve Him we receive from Him. To our Redeemer only belongs the merit and glory of our services, and to us nothing but the gratitude and humility of pardoned rebels. (*J. Rogers, D.D.*)

The praise of service belongs to God.—Here is a little stream trickling down the mountain side. As it proceeds, other streams join it in succession from the right and left until it

becomes a river. Ever flowing, and ever increasing as it flows, it thinks it will make a great contribution to the ocean when it shall reach the shore at length. No, river, you are an unprofitable servant; the ocean does not need you; could do as well and be as full without you; is not in any measure made up by you. True, rejoins the river, the ocean is so great that all my volume poured into it makes no sensible difference; but still I contribute so much, and this, as far as it goes, increases the amount of the ocean's supply. No: this indeed is the seeming to the ignorant observer on the spot; but whoever obtains deeper knowledge and a wider range, will discover and confess that the river is an unprofitable servant to the sea—that it contributes absolutely nothing to the sea's store. From the ocean came every drop of water that rolls down in that river's bed, alike those that fell into it in rain from the sky, and those that flowed into it from tributary rivers, and those that sprang from hidden veins in the earth. Even although it should restore all, it gives only what it received. It could not flow, it could not be, without the free gift of all from the sea. To the sea it owes its existence and power. The sea owes it nothing; would be as broad and deep although this river had never been. But all this natural process goes on, sweetly and beneficently, notwithstanding: the river gets and gives; the ocean gives and gets. Thus the circle goes round, beneficent to creation, glorious to God. Thus, in the spiritual sphere—in the world that God has created by the Spirit of His Son—circulations beautiful and beneficent continually play. From Him, and by Him, and to Him are all things. To the saved man through whom God's mercy flows, the activity is unspeakably precious: to him the profit, but to God the praise. (*W. Arnot.*)

The creature has no absolute merit:—I. In the first place, he must so say, and so feel, because he is a CREATED being. Mere dead matter cannot exert any living functions. The saw cannot saw the sawyer. The axe cannot chop the chopper. They are lifeless instruments in a living hand, and must move as they are moved. It is impossible that by any independent agency of their own they should act upon man, and make him the passive subject of their operations. But it is yet more impossible for a creature to establish himself upon an independent position in reference to the Creator. Every atom and element in his body and soul is originated, and kept in being, by the steady exertion of his Maker's power. If this were relaxed for an instant he would cease to be. Nothing, therefore, can be more helpless and dependent than a creature; and no relation so throws a man upon the bare power and support of God as creaturely relation. II. In the second place, man cannot make himself "profitable" unto God, and lay Him under obligation, because he is constantly SUSTAINED AND UPHELD BY GOD. III. In the third place, man cannot be "profitable" to God, and merit His thanks, because all his GOOD WORKS DEPEND UPON THE OPERATION AND ASSISTANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. Our Lord's doctrine of human merit is cognate with the doctrine of Divine grace.

1. In the first place, we see in the light of our Lord's theory of human merit, why it is impossible for a creature to make atonement for sin. 2. In the second place, we see in the light of this subject why the creature, even though he be sinlessly perfect, must be humble. 3. And this leads to a third and final inference from the subject, namely, that God does not require man to be a "profitable" servant, but to be a faithful servant. Whoever is thus faithful will be rewarded with as great a reward as if he were an independent and self-sustaining agent. Nay, even if man could be a "profitable" servant, and could bring God under obligation to him, his happiness in receiving a recompense under such circumstances would not compare with that under the present arrangement. It would be a purely mercantile transaction between the parties. There would be no love in the service, or in the recompense. The creature would calmly, proudly, do his work, and the Creator would calmly pay him his wages. And the transaction would end there, like any other bargain. But now, there is affection between the parties—filial love on one side, and paternal love on the other; dependence, and weakness, and clinging trust, on one side, and grace, and almighty power, and infinite fulness on the other. God rewards by *promise* and by *covenant*, and not because of an absolute and original indebtedness to the creature of His power. And the creature feels that he is what he is, because of the grace of God. (*W. G. T. Shedd, D.D.*)

Unprofitable servants:—A.L.O.E., in "Triumph over Midian," writes: "You have not your due," were the words which a wife addressed to a husband, who had been deprived of some advantage which she considered to have been his right. "May God be praised that I have not my due!" he replied. "What is my due as a sinner before God? What is

my due from a world which I have renounced for His sake? Had I chosen my portion in this life, then only might I complain of not receiving my due." *Our Duty*.—The faithful performance of duty in our station, ennobles that station whatever it may be. There is a beautiful story told of the great Spartan Brasidas. When he complained that Sparta was a small state, his mother said to him: "Son, Sparta has fallen to your lot, and it is your duty to adorn it." I (the Earl of Shaftesbury) would only say to all workers, everywhere, in all positions of life, whatever be the lot in which you are cast, it is your duty to adorn it.

Vers. 11-19. Ten men that were lepers.—*The ten lepers*.—I. **THEIR ORIGINAL CONDITION.** Defiled. Separated. II. **THEIR APPLICATION TO CHRIST.** 1. Observe the distance they kept from His person. 2. The earnestness of their prayer. 3. The unanimity of their application. 4. The reverence and faith they evinced. III. **THE CURE BROUGHT.** IV. **THE THANKS RENDERED BY THE SAMARITAN AND THE INGRATITUDE OF THE NINE.** 1. The willingness and power of Christ to heal. 2. The application to be made. 3. The return He demands of those He saves. 4. The commonness of ingratitude. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *The ten lepers*.—I. THE STORY ENCOURAGES WORK ON FRONTIERS AND BORDERS. Jesus met the lepers "in the midst of"—that is, probably, along the frontier line between—"Samarita and Galilee," on His way east to the Jordan. Their common misery drew these natural enemies, the Jews and the Samaritans, together. The national prejudice of each was destroyed. Under these circumstances the border was a favourable retreat for them. The border population is always freer from prejudice and more open to influence. II. THE STORY SHOWS THAT THERE IS A SENSE IN WHICH IMPENITENT MEN CAN PRAY. The lepers prayed. That weak, hoarse cry affectingly expressed their sense of need—one characteristic of true prayer. Their standing afar off further expressed their sense of guilt—another characteristic of acceptable prayer. Their disease was a type of the death of sin. Their isolation expressed the exclusion of the polluted and abominable from the city of God. III. THE STORY SHOWS THAT THERE IS A SENSE IN WHICH GOD ANSWERS THE PRAYERS OF IMPENITENT MEN. IV. THE STORY SHOWS HOW THE FORM OF OBEDIENCE MAY EXIST WITHOUT ITS SPIRIT. V. THE STORY SHOWS US THAT A DEGREE OF FAITH MAY EXIST WITHOUT LOVE, AND SO WITHOUT SAVING POWER. There was a weak beginning of faith in all the ten. It is shown in their setting out without a word, though as yet uncleansed, for Jerusalem. This must have required faith of a high order. If it had worked by love all would have been saved. This was one trouble with the nine, and the radical one—they did not love. Calvin describes their case, and that of many like them. "Want and hunger," he says, "create a faith which gratification kills." It is real faith, yet hath it no root. VI. THE STORY SHOWS US THE SIN OF INGRATITUDE, AND THE PLACE WHICH GRATITUDE FILLS WITH GOD. The Samaritan was the only one who returned, and he was the only one saved. "Birth did not give the Jew a place in the kingdom of heaven; gratitude gave it to a Samaritan." Blessings are good, but not for themselves. They are to draw us to the Giver, they are tests of character. True gratitude to God involves two things, both of which were found in the leper. 1. He was humble; he fell at Jesus' feet. He remembered what he had been when Jesus found him, and the pit whence he was digged. If blessings do not make us humble, they are lost upon us. 2. Gratitude involves, also, the exaltation of God. The leper glorified God. A German, who was converted, expressed himself afterward with a beautiful spirit of humility and praise: "My wife is rejoicing," he said, "I am rejoicing, my Saviour is rejoicing." On another occasion he said, "I went this evening to kiss my little children good-night. As I was standing there my wife said to me, 'Dear husband, you love these our children very dearly, but it is not a thousandth part as much as the blessed Saviour loves us.'" What spirit should more characterize God's creatures than gratitude? What should we more certainly look for as the mark of a Christian? God blesses it. He blessed the leper; He cleansed the leprosy deeper than that in his flesh, the leprosy of sin. The nine went on their way with bodies healed, but with a more loathsome disease still upon them, the leprosy of ingratitude. We classify sins. "We may find by and by that in God's sight ingratitude is the blackest of all." There is an application of this truth to Christians which we should not miss. Gratitude gives continual access to higher and higher blessings. The ungrateful Christian loses spiritual blessings. If we value the gift above the Giver, all that we should receive in returning to Him we lose. (*G. R. Leavitt.*) *The ten lepers*.—I. THE BLESSING WHICH THEY ALL RECEIVED. 1. A healthy body. 2. Restoration to society. 3. Re-

admission to the sanctuary. II. THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE NINE. III. THE LOSS SUSTAINED BY THE NINE IN CONSEQUENCE OF THEIR INGRATITUDE. Lessons—1. In the bestowment of His grace, God is no respecter of persons. 2. Our Lord regards moral and religious obligations as more important than those which are positive and ceremonial. 3. Answers to prayer should be received with thanksgiving. (*F. F. Goe, M.A.*) *The lepers*:—Affliction quickens to prayer; but those who remember God in their distresses often forget Him in their deliverances. 1. Observe the condition in which Jesus found the applicants. 2. Observe the state in which Jesus left them. 3. Their subsequent conduct. I. THE GREAT EVIL AND PREVALENCY OF INGRATITUDE. 1. It is a sin so very common that not one in ten can be found that is not guilty of it in a very flagrant manner, and not one in ten thousand but what is liable to the charge in some degree. It is a prevailing vice among all ranks and conditions in society. 2. Common as this sin is, it is nevertheless a sin of great magnitude. Should not the patient be thankful for the recovery of his health, especially where the relief has been gratuitously afforded? Should not the debtor or the criminal be thankful to his surety or his prince, who freely gave him his liberty or his life? (1) It is a sin of which no one can be ignorant; it is a sin against the light of nature, as well as against the law of revelation. (2) Ingratitude carries in it a degree of injustice towards the Author of all our mercies, in that it denies to Him the glory due unto His name, and is a virtual impeachment of His goodness. (3) Unthankfulness brings a curse upon the blessings we enjoy, and provokes the Giver to deprive us of them. II. CONSIDER THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS EVIL MAY BE PREVENTED. 1. Be clothed with humility, and cherish a proper sense of your own meanness and unworthiness. 2. Give every mercy its full weight. Call no sin small, and no mercy small. 3. Take a collective view of all your mercies, and you will see perpetual cause for thankfulness. 4. Consider your mercies in a comparative view. Compare them with your deserts; put your provocations in one scale, and Divine indulgences in another, and see which preponderates. Compare your afflictions with your mercies. 5. Think how ornamental to religion is a grateful and humble spirit. 6. There is no unthankfulness in heaven. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *The ten lepers*:—1. The first thing I would have you notice is, that the ten were at first undistinguishable in their misery. That there were differences of character among them we know; that there were differences of race, of education, and training, we know too, for one at least was a Samaritan, and under no other circumstances, perhaps, would his companions have had any dealings with him; but all their differences were obliterated, their natural antipathies were lost, beneath the common pressure of their frightful misery—their very voices were blended in one urgent cry, “Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us.” “One touch of nature,” says the great poet, “makes the whole world kin”: true, and alas! never so true as when that touch of nature is the sense of guilt. This is the great leveller, not only of the highest and lowest, but of the best and worst, effacing all distinctions, even of moral character; for, when one attempts to weigh one’s sin and count it up, it seems impossible to establish degrees in one’s own favour—one feels as if there were a dreadful equality of guilt for all, and one was no better than another. 2. I would have you notice, in the second place, the apparent tameness of their cure. Our Lord neither lays His finger on them, nor holds any conference, but merely tells them to go and show themselves to the priests, according to the letter of that now antiquated and perishing law of Moses. Never was so great a cure worked in so tame a fashion since the time of Naaman the Syrian; well for them that they had a humbler spirit and a more confiding faith than he, or they, too, would have gone away in a rage and been never the better. Now, I think we may see in this a striking parable of how our Lord evermore deals with penitent sinners. He does not, as a rule, make any wonderful revelation of Himself to the soul which He heals; there is no dramatic “scene” which can be reported to others. There is, indeed, often something very commonplace, and therefore disappointing, about His dealings with penitents. He remits them to their religious duties—to those things which men account as outward and formal, and therefore feeble, which have indeed no power at all in themselves to heal the leprosy of sin, such as the means of grace, the ministry of reconciliation. In these things there is no excitement; they do not carry away the soul with a rush of enthusiasm, or fill it with a trembling awe. 3. And, in the third place, I would have you notice the unexpected way in which He addressed the one who came back to express his heartfelt gratitude. “Arise, go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole.” Now, it is obvious that these words were just as applicable to the other nine as to him,

for they, too, had been made whole, and made whole by faith; all had believed, all had started off obediently to show themselves to the priests, and all alike had been cleansed through faith as they went. Does it not seem strange that He took no notice of the gratitude which was peculiar to the one to whom He spake, and only made mention of the faith which was common to them all? Did He not do it advisedly? Did He not intend us to learn a lesson thereby? We know that this story sets forth as a parable our own conduct as redeemed and pardoned sinners. We know that the great bulk of Christians *are* ungrateful; that they are far more concerned in lamenting the petty losses and securing the petty gains of life, than in showing their thankfulness to God for His inestimable love. What about them? Will unthankful Christians also receive the salvation of their souls? I suppose so. I think this story teaches us so, and I think our Lord's words to the one that returned are meant to enforce that teaching. All were cleansed, though only one gave glory to God; even so we are all made whole by faith, though scarcely one in ten shows any gratitude for it. The ingratitude of Christian people may indeed mar very grievously the work of grace, but it cannot undo it. "Thy faith hath made thee whole" is the common formula which includes all the saved, although amongst them be found differences so striking, and deficiencies so painful. There are that use religion itself selfishly, thinking only of the personal advantage it will be to themselves, and of the pleasure it brings within their reach. But these are certainly not the happiest. Vexed with every trifle, worried about every difficulty, entangled with a thousand uncertainties, if all things go well they just acquiesce in it, as if they had a right to expect it; if things go wrong they begin at once to complain, as though they were ill-used; if they become worse, then they are miserable, as though all cause for rejoicing were gone. Now, I need not remind you how fearfully such a temper dishonours God. When He has freely given us an eternal inheritance of joy, a kingdom which cannot be shaken, an immortality beyond the reach of sin or suffering, it is simply monstrous that we should murmur at the shadows of sorrow which fleck our sea of blessing, it should seem simply incredible that we do not continually pour out our very souls in thanksgiving unto Him that loved us and gave Himself for us. But I will say this, that our ingratitude is the secret of our little happiness in this life. Our redeemed lives were meant to be like that summer sea when it dances and sparkles beneath the glorious sun; instead of which they are like a sullen, muddy pool upon a cloudy day, which gives back nothing but the changing hues of gloom. It is not outward circumstance, it is the presence or absence of a thankful spirit which makes all the difference to our lives. Gratitude to God is the sunshine of our souls, *with* which the tamest scene is bright and the wildest beautiful, *without* which the fairest landscape is but sombre. (*R. Winterbotham, M.A.*) *Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity:—*Three impressive and instructive pictures are described in this gospel. I. A CONGREGATION OF SUFFERERS, whom affliction influenced to much seeming goodness and piety. It is a beautiful and comforting truth, that there is no depth of suffering, or distance from the pure and the good to which sin may banish men in this world, where they are debarred from carrying their sorrows and griefs in prayer to God. A man may be guilty, leprosy, cast out, cut off, given up as irretrievably lost; and yet, if he will, he may call on God for help, and the genuine, hearty, earnest, and real cry of his soul will reach the ear of God. II. A MARVELLOUS INTERFERENCE OF DIVINE POWER AND GRACE for their relief, very unsatisfactorily acknowledged and improved. Dark-day and sick-bed religion is apt to be a religion of mere constraint. Take the pressure off, and it is apt to be like the morning cloud and the early dew, which "goeth away." Give me a man who has learned to know and fear God in the daytime, and I shall not be much in doubt of him when the night comes. But the piety which takes its existence in times of cloud and darkness, like the growths common to such seasons, is apt to be as speedy in its decline as it is quick and facile in its rise. There are mushrooms in the field of grace, as well as in the field of nature. III. AN INSTANCE OF LONELY GRATITUDE, resulting in most precious blessings superadded to the miraculous cure. There was not only a faith to get the bodily cure, but a faith which brought out a complete and practical discipleship; an earnest and abiding willingness, in prosperity as well as in adversity, to wear the Saviour's yoke. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*) *Only trust Him:—*As these men were to start straight away to the priest with all their leprosy white upon them, and to go there as if they felt they were already healed, so are you, with all your sinnership upon you, and your sense of condemnation heavy on your soul, to believe in Jesus Christ just as you are, and you shall

find everlasting life upon the spot. I. First, then, I say that we are to believe in Jesus Christ—to trust Him to heal us of the great disease of sin—though as yet we may have about us no sign or token that He has wrought any good work upon us. We are not to look for signs and evidences within ourselves before we venture our souls upon Jesus. The contrary supposition is a soul-destroying error, and I will try to expose it by showing **WHAT ARE THE SIGNS THAT ARE COMMONLY LOOKED FOR BY MEN.** 1. One of the most frequent is a consciousness of great sin, and a horrible dread of Divine wrath, leading to despair. If you say, “Lord, I cannot trust Thee unless I feel this or that,” then you, in effect, say, “I can trust my own feelings, but I cannot trust God’s appointed Saviour.” What is this but to make a god out of your feelings, and a saviour out of your inward griefs? 2. Many other persons think that they must, before they can trust Christ, experience quite a blaze of joy. “Why,” you say, “must I not be happy before I can believe in Christ?” Must you needs have the joy before you exercise the faith? How unreasonable! 3. We have known others who have expected to have a text impressed upon their minds. In old families there are superstitions about white birds coming to a window before a death, and I regard with much the same distrust the more common superstition that if a text continues upon your mind day after day you may safely conclude that it is an assurance of your salvation. The Spirit of God often does apply Scripture with power to the soul; but this fact is never set forth as the rock for us to build upon. 4. There is another way in which some men try to get off believing in Christ, and that is, they expect an actual conversion to be manifest in them before they will trust the Saviour. Conversion is the manifestation of Christ’s healing power. But you are not to have this before you trust Him; you are to trust Him for this very thing. II. And now, secondly, I want to bring forward **WHAT THE REASON IS FOR OUR BELIEVING IN JESUS CHRIST.** No warrant whatever within ourself need be looked for. The warrant for our believing Christ lies in this—1. There is God’s witness concerning His Son Jesus Christ. God, the Everlasting Father, has set forth Christ “to be the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sin of the whole world.” 2. The next warrant for our believing is Jesus Christ Himself. He bears witness on earth as well as the Father, and His witness is true. 3. I dare say these poor lepers believed in Jesus because they had heard of other lepers whom He had cleansed. III. **WHAT IS THE ISSUE OF THIS KIND OF FAITH THAT I HAVE BEEN PREACHING?** This trusting in Jesus without marks, signs, evidences, tokens, what is the result and outcome of it? 1. The first thing that I have to say about it is this—that the very existence of such a faith as that in the soul is evidence that there is already a saving change. Every man by nature kicks against simply trusting in Christ; and when at last he yields to the Divine method of mercy it is a virtual surrender of his own will, the ending of rebellion, the establishment of peace. Faith is obedience. 2. It will be an evidence, also, that you are humble; for it is pride that makes men want to do something, or to be something, in their own salvation, or to be saved in some wonderful way. 3. Again, faith in Jesus will be the best evidence that you are reconciled to God, for the worst evidence of your enmity to God is that you do not like God’s way of salvation. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The ten lepers:—*I. A WRETCHED COMPANY. II. A SURPRISED COMPANY. 1. The occasion of the surprise. (1) They suddenly met Jesus. (a) Life is full of surprises. (b) To meet Jesus is the best of all life’s surprises. 2. The effects of this surprise. (1) Hope was enlarged within them. (2) Prayer for mercy broke forth from them. (3) Healing of their dreadful malady was experienced by them. III. AN UNGRATEFUL COMPANY. 1. Consider the number healed. 2. The cry which brought the healing. 3. The simultaneousness of the healing. 4. The ingratitude of the healed. (1) Only one returned to acknowledge the mercy. (2) This one a stranger. (3) The ungrateful are those of the Master’s own household. (4) Are these representative facts? 5. Consider the special blessing bestowed on the grateful soul. (1) Not only healed in body, but also in soul. (2) Soul-healing ever requires personal faith. (D. C. Hughes, M.A.) *The ten lepers:—*I. THEIR APPLICATION. It was—1. Unanimous. 2. Earnest. 3. Respectful and humble. II. THEIR CURE. 1. A wonderful manifestation of Christ’s power. He is a rich Saviour, rich in mercy and rich in power. 2. Great faith and obedience exhibited on their part. III. THE THANKFULNESS MANIFESTED BY ONE OF THESE HEALED MEN. 1. Prompt. 2. Warm, hearty, earnest. 3. Humble and reverential. More so, observe, than even his prayer. When he cried for mercy, he stood; when he gives thanks for mercy, he falls down on his face. The thankfulness of this man was elevated also. It was accompanied with

high thoughts of God, and a setting forth, as far as he was able, of God's glory. He is said in the text to have "glorified God." And observe how he blends together in his thankfulness God and Christ. He glorifies the one, and at the same time he falls down before the other, giving Him thanks. Did he then look on our Lord in His real character, as God? Perhaps he did. The wonderful cure he had received in his body, might have been accompanied with as wonderful an outpouring of grace and light into his mind. God and Christ, God's glory and Christ's mercy, were so blended together in his mind, that he could not separate them. Neither, brethren, can you separate them, if you know anything aright of Christ and His mercy. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*)

The ten lepers:—1. Look at the afflicted objects. 2. Observe the direction of the Divine Physician. The Saviour, by sending the lepers to the priest, not only honoured the law which had prescribed this conduct, but secured to Himself the testimony of the appointed judge and witness of the cure; for, as this disease was considered to be both inflicted and cured by the hand of God Himself, and as He had cured it, He thus left a witness in the conscience of the priest, that He was what He professed to be. 3. Follow these men on the road, and behold the triumphant success of Christ's merciful designs. Christ's cure was not only effectual, but universal. No one of the ten is excepted as too diseased, or too unworthy; but among all these men there is only one that we look at with pleasure. He was a stranger. 4. Contemplate more closely the grateful Samaritan. What a lovely object is gratitude at the feet of Mercy! 5. But what a contrast is presented by the ungrateful Jews. 6. Yet how gently the Saviour rebukes their unthankfulness. He might have said—"What! so absorbed in the enjoyment of health as to forget the Giver! Then the leprosy which I healed shall return to you, and cleave to you for ever." But, no; He only asks—"Are there not found any that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger?" And, turning to the man prostrate in the dust at His feet, Jesus said, "Arise, go to thy house, thy faith hath made thee whole." Concluding lessons—1. This subject shows the compassion of the Saviour. 2. Let each ask himself, "Am I a leper?" 3. See the hatefulness of ingratitude. (*T. Gibson, M.A.*)

Gratitude for Divine favours:—I. WE ARE CONTINUALLY RECEIVING FAVOURS FROM GOD. No creature is independent. All are daily receiving from the Father of lights, from whom "cometh every good and perfect gift," and "with whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning." Our bodies, with all their powers; and our souls, with all their capacities, are derived from Him. But whilst the beneficence of the Supreme Being is, in one sense, general; it is, in another, restricted. Some are more highly favoured than others. Some have experienced remarkable interpositions of Divine providence. Some have been raised up from dangerous illness. Some have been advanced in worldly possessions. Some are the partakers of distinguished privileges. Such are those who are favoured with the dispensation of the gospel. II. THAT THESE FAVOURS SHOULD INDUCE

A SUITABLE RETURN. 1. Gratitude will not be regarded as unsuitable. We always expect this from our fellow-creatures who participate in our bounty. 2. Commendation is another suitable return. Make known the lovely character of your merciful Redeemer to others. 3. Service is another suitable return. "Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and with godly fear." 4. Humiliation is a suitable return. This Samaritan prostrated himself before his Divine Healer. How unspeakable is the felicity of that man, who, deeply humbled under a sense of the manifold mercies of God, can lift up his eyes to the great Judge of quick and dead, and say in sincerity, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my soul lofty, neither do I exercise myself in great matters, nor in things too high for me; I have surely behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of its mother: my soul is even as a weaned child!" 5. Honour is a suitable return. This Samaritan was not, perhaps, acquainted with our Lord's divinity; but he regarded Him as some extraordinary personage, and, as was customary in such cases, he prostrated himself before Him, as a token of great respect and veneration. Entertain the most exalted conceptions of Him; you cannot raise your thoughts too high: "He is God over all, blessed for ever." III. THAT THIS RETURN IS TOO COMMONLY NEGLECTED. The cause of this forgetfulness is to be traced, in general, to the influence of inward depravity; and nothing is a clearer proof of the corruption of our nature; but there are other causes, co-operating with this, of which we may mention two. First: Worldly prosperity. Honey does not more powerfully attract bees than affluence generates danger. Secondly: Worldly anxiety is another cause of this forgetfulness. IV. WE MAY OBSERVE, THAT TO NEGLECT A RETURN OF GRATITUDE TO GOD IS HIGHLY REPREHENS-

SIBLE. Nay, it is exceedingly sinful. What insensibility does it argue, and what criminality does it involve! It is a virtual denial of the Divine providence. (*Ibid.*) *The earnestness of personal necessity* :—One fact is brought most powerfully before us here, and that is—1. The personal necessity of these ten men. So strong was it that it gained a victory over national prejudices of the fiercest kind, and we find the Samaritan in company with the Jew. Amongst men not conscious of a common misery, such a union might have been looked for but in vain; the Jew would have loathed the Samaritan and the Samaritan would have scorned the Jew. And there is too much reason for supposing that a want of personal religion is the cause of much of that fierce estrangement which characterizes the different parties and denominations of the religious world in the present day. Did men realize their common sinfulness, the deep necessity which enfolds them all, we can well believe that much of the energy which is now wasted in profitless controversy and angry recrimination, would be spent in united supplication to the One, who alone can do ought for the sinner in his need. 2. Again we see how personal necessity triumphs over national prejudice, in the fact that the Samaritan is willing to call upon a Jew for safety and for help. Under ordinary circumstances he would have held no communion with Him at all, but the fact that he was a leper, and that Jesus could cure him, overcame the national antipathy and he joins his voice with that of all the rest. And surely thus also is it with the leper of the spiritual world; when he has been brought truly to know his state, truly to smart under its degradation and its pain, truly to believe that there is One at hand by whom he can be healed, the power of the former pride and prejudice becomes broken down, and he cries out in earnest to the long-despised Jesus for the needed help. 3. We have now seen the power of personal necessity in overcoming strongly-rooted prejudice; let us next proceed to consider it as productive of great earnestness in supplication. The supplication of these men was loud and personal; they lifted up their voices, and fixed on one alone of Jesu's company as able to deliver them, and that one was Jesus Christ Himself. And we can well understand how this plague-stricken family united their energies in a long, earnest cry to attract the attention of the One that alone could make them whole. Theirs was no feeble whisper, no dull and muffled sound, but a piteous, an agonizing call which almost startled the very air as it rushed along. Nor can we marvel if God refuse to hear the cold, dull prayers which for the most part fall upon His ear; they are not the expressions of need, and therefore find little favour at His hands; they come to Him like the compliments which men pay to their fellow-men, and meaning nothing, they are taken for exactly what they are worth. 4. And mark, how by the loudness of their cry these unhappy men expose their miserable state to Christ—the one absorbing point which they wished to press upon His notice was the fact that they were all lepers, ten diseased and almost despairing men. In their case there was no hiding of their woe, they wished the Lord to see the worst. (*P. B. Power, M.A.*) **He was a Samaritan.**—*The Samaritan's gratitude* :—It is necessary to notice the saving element in this man's gratitude. We can imagine the other nine saying to him as he turned back, "We are as grateful to God as you are, but we will return our thanks in the temple of God. There are certain acts of worship, certain sacrifices ordained in the law by God Himself. In the due performance of these we will thank God in His own appointed way. He who healed us is a great Prophet, but it is the great power of God alone which has cleansed us." Now the Samaritan was not content with this. His faith worked by love, taking the form of thankfulness. He at once left the nine to their journey, and, without delay, threw himself at the feet of the Lord. He felt that his was not a common healing—not a healing in the way of nature, by the disease exhausting itself in time. It was a supernatural healing, through the intervention of a particular servant of God; and this servant (or, perhaps, he had heard that Jesus claimed to be more than a servant, even the Son of God) must be thanked and glorified. If God had healed him in the ordinary course, the sacrifices prescribed for such healing would have sufficed. But God had healed him in an extraordinary way—by His Son, by One who was far greater than any prophet; and so, if God was to be glorified, it must be in connection with this extraordinary channel of blessing, this Mediator. (*M. F. Sadler.*) *Gratitude heightens the power of enjoyment* :—Man's gratitude is, I have often thought and said, a sixth sense; for it always heightens the power of enjoyment. Suppose a man to walk through the world with every sense excited to its utmost nerve: let there be a world of dainties spread before him and around him, and the aromas of all precious fragrances steeping his senses in delicious and

exquisite enjoyment; let the eye be gladdened and brighten over the knowledge, and the hand tighten over the grasp of present and actual possession; yet let him be a man in whose nature there wakes no keen sensation of grateful remembrance, and I say that yet the most delightful sensation is denied him. Grateful thankfulness is allied to—nay, forms an ingredient in—the very chief of our deepest enjoyments, and purest springs of blessedness. Gratitude gives all the sweet spice to the cup of contentment, and the cup of discontent derives all its acid from an ungrateful heart. (*E. P. Hood.*) *Unexpected piety*:—"And he was a Samaritan." Thus frequently, in like manner, have we been surprised at the finding of gratitude to God in most unexpected places and persons. We have often seen that it is by no means in proportion to the apparent munificence of the Divine bounty. It is proverbial that the hymn of praise rises more frequently from the peasant's fireside than from palace gates—more frequently from straitened than from abounding circumstances. Wherefore let us ourselves adore the exalting graces of the Divine goodness, which makes the smallest measure of God's grace to outweigh the mightiest measure of circumstantial happiness. As long as God merely gives the gilded shell—the scaffolding of the palace—He gives but little; and it has been frequently said that He shows His disregard of riches by giving them to the worst of men frequently; but to possess a sense of His mercy and goodness, that exceeds them all. (*Ibid.*) *Ingratitude for Divine favours*:—The Staubach is a fall of remarkable magnificence, seeming to leap from heaven; its glorious stream reminds one of the abounding mercy which in a mighty torrent descends from above. In the winter, when the cold is severe, the water freezes at the foot of the fall, and rises up in huge icicles like stalagmites, until it reaches the fall itself, as though it sought to bind it in the same icy fetters. How like this is to the common ingratitude of men! Earth's ingratitude rises up to meet heaven's mercy; as though the very goodness of God helped us to defy Him. Divine favours, frozen by human ingratitude, are proudly lifted in rebellion against the God who gave them. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Where are the nine?*—*Ingratitude towards God*:—I. THE IGNOMINY OF INGRATITUDE. 1. The ungrateful Christian acts against the voice of his conscience. (1) Natural reason acknowledges the duty of gratitude. (2) The general consent of mankind brands with infamy the ungrateful. 2. Ingratitude sinks the human being below the level of the brute creation. 3. Ingratitude is infinitely ignominious, because directed against God. (1) God exhorts us so often to be grateful. (2) His beneficence is unlimited. (3) All His benefits are gratuities. (4) The ungrateful man denies, in fact, the existence of God. II. THE FERNICIOUS CONSEQUENCES OF INGRATITUDE. 1. Temporal consequences. (1) God threatens to deprive the ungrateful of the blessings received (Luke ix. 26). God has ever been the absolute owner of whatever He gives; and He gives and takes according to His good pleasure. (a) He threatens so to direct events that His gift shall become a curse instead of a blessing to the ungrateful receiver. (b) To refuse whatever he may ask for in future. (c) To send chastisements upon him so as to convince him that He is the Lord. (2) God fulfilled His threatenings (a) on our first parents; (b) on Israel; (c) on Nebuchadnezzar. (d) Your own life and the life of your acquaintances will bear similar testimony. 2. Everlasting consequences. If the sinner remain ungrateful to the end of his earthly life, he will be deprived of all Divine gifts for all eternity. He will be deprived—(1) Of the Word of God, instead of which he will incessantly hear only the words of Satan. (2) Of the celestial light against which he closed his eyes; in punishment of which he will be buried in everlasting darkness. (3) Of the Beatific Vision, instead of which he will behold only the vision of devilish deformity. (4) Of the sacramental means of salvation. (5) Of heavenly peace and joy. (*Horar.*) *The causes of ingratitude*:—"The nine, where?" Thus Christ with censure, sadness, surprise inquires. There are more than nine sources of ingratitude. But there are nine, and each of these men may represent some one. I. One is CALLOUS. He did not feel his misery as much as some, nor is he much stirred now by his return to health. Sullen, torpid, stony men are thankless. Callousness is a common cause of ingratitude. II. One is THOUGHTLESS. He is more like shifting sand than hard stone, but he never reflects, never introspects, never recollects. The unreflecting are ungrateful. III. One is PROUD. He has not had more than his merit in being healed. Why should he be thankful for what his respectability, his station, deserved? Only the humble-hearted are truly grateful. IV. One is ENVIOUS. Though healed he has not all that some others have. They are younger, or stronger, or have more friends to welcome them. He is envious. Envy turns sour

the milk of thankfulness. V. One is COWARDLY. The Healer is scorned, persecuted, hated. The expression of gratitude may bring some of such hatred on himself. The craven is always a mean ingrate. VI. One is CALCULATING the result of acknowledging the benefit received. Perhaps some claim may arise of discipleship, or gift. VII. One is WORLDLY. Already he has purpose of business in Jerusalem, or plan of pleasures there, that fascinates him from returning to give thanks. VIII. One is GREGARIOUS. He would have expressed gratitude if the other eight would, but he has no independence, no individuality. IX. One is PROCRASTINATING. By and by. Meanwhile Christ asks, "Where are the nine?" (*Urijah R. Thomas.*) *The sin of ingratitude* :—There are, speaking broadly, three chief reasons for unthankfulness on the part of man towards God. First, an indistinct idea or an under-estimate of the service that He renders us; secondly, a disposition, whether voluntary or not, to lose sight of our benefactor; thirdly, the notion that it does not matter much to Him whether we acknowledge His benefits or not. Let us take these in order. I. There is, first of all, THE DISPOSITION TO MAKE LIGHT OF A BLESSING OR BENEFIT RECEIVED. Of this the nine lepers in the gospel could hardly have been guilty—at any rate, at the moment of their cure. To the Jews especially, as in a lesser degree to the Eastern world at large, this disease, or group of diseases, appeared in their own language to be as a living death. The nine lepers were more probably like children with a new toy, too delighted with their restored health and honour to think of the gracious friend to whom they owed it. In the case of some temporal blessings it is thus sometimes with us: the gift obscures the giver by its very wealth and profusion. But in spiritual things we are more likely to think chiefly of the gift. At bottom of their want of thankfulness there lies a radically imperfect estimate of the blessings of redemption, and until this is reversed they cannot seriously look into the face of Christ and thank Him for His inestimable love. II. Thanklessness is due, secondly, TO LOSING SIGHT OF OUR BENEFACTOR, AND OF THIS THE NINE LEPERS WERE NO DOUBT GUILTY. Such a thanklessness as this may arise from carelessness, or it may be partly deliberate. The former was probably the case with the nine lepers. The powerful and benevolent stranger who had told them to go to the priests to be inspected had fallen already into the background of their thought, and if they reasoned upon the causes of their cure they probably thought of some natural cause, or of the inherent virtue of the Mosaic ordinances. For a sample of thanklessness arising from a careless forgetfulness of kindness received, look at the bearing of many children in the present day towards their parents. How often in place of a loving and reverent bearing do young men and women assume with their parents a footing of perfect equality, if not of something more, as if, forsooth, they had conferred a great benefit upon their fathers and mothers by becoming their children, and giving them the opportunity of working for their support and education. This does not—I fully believe it does not—in nine cases out of ten imply a bad heart in the son or daughter. It is simply a form of that thanklessness which is due to want of reflection on the real obligations which they owe to the human authors of their life. III. Thanklessness is due, thirdly, TO THE UTILITARIAN SPIRIT. If prayer be efficacious the use of it is obvious; but where, men ask, is the use of thankfulness? What is the good of thankfulness, they say, at any rate when addressed to such a being as God? If man does us a service and we repay him, that is intelligible: he needs our repayment. We repay him in kind if we can, or if we cannot, we repay him with our thanks, which gratify his sense of active benevolence—perhaps his lower sense of self-importance. But what benefit can God get by receiving the thanks of creatures whom He has made and whom He supports? Now, if the lepers did think thus, our Lord's remark shows that they were mistaken—not in supposing that a Divine Benefactor is not dependent for His happiness on the return which His creatures may make to Him—not in thinking that it was out of their power to make Him any adequate return at all—but at least in imagining that it was a matter of indifference to Him whether He was thanked or not. If not for His own sake, yet for theirs, He would be thanked. To thank the author of a blessing is for the receiver of the blessing to place himself voluntarily under the law of truth by acknowledging the fact that he has been blest. To do this is a matter of hard moral obligation; it is also a condition of moral force. "It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty Everlasting God." Why meet? Why right? Because it is the acknowledgment of a hard fact—the fact that all things come of God, the fact that we are utterly dependent upon Him, the fact that all

existence, all life, is but an outflow of His love; because to blink this fact is to fall back into the darkness and to forfeit that strength which comes always and everywhere with the energetic acknowledgment of truth. Morally speaking, the nine lepers were not the men they would have been if, at the cost of some trouble, they had accompanied the one who, "when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, giving Him thanks." (*Canon Liddon.*)

Praise neglected.—I. THE SINGULARITY OF THANKFULNESS. 1. Here note—there are more who receive benefits than ever give praise for them. Nine persons healed, one person glorifying God; nine persons healed of leprosy, mark you, and only one person kneeling down at Jesus' feet, and thanking Him for it! 2. But there is something more remarkable than this—the number of those who pray is greater than the number of those who praise. For these ten men that were lepers all prayed. But when they came to the Te Deum, magnifying and praising God, only one of them took up the note. One would have thought that all who prayed would praise, but it is not so. Cases have been where a whole ship's crew in time of storm has prayed, and yet none of that crew have sung the praise of God when the storm has become a calm. 3. Most of us pray more than we praise. Yet prayer is not so heavenly an exercise as praise. Prayer is for time; but praise is for eternity. 4. There are more that believe than there are that praise. It is real faith, I trust—it is not for me to judge it, but it is faulty in result. So also among ourselves, there are men who get benefits from Christ, who even hope that they are saved, but they do not praise Him. Their lives are spent in examining their own skins to see whether their leprosy is gone. Their religious life reveals itself in a constant searching of themselves to see if they are really healed. This is a poor way of spending one's energies. II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE THANKFULNESS. 1. Living praise is marked by individuality. 2. Promptness. Go at once, and praise the Saviour. 3. Spirituality. 4. Intensity. "With a loud voice." 5. Humility. 6. Worship. 7. One thing more about this man I want to notice as to his thankfulness, and that is, his silence as to censuring others. When the Saviour said, "Where are the nine?" I notice that this man did not reply. But the adoring stranger did not stand up, and say, "O Lord, they are all gone off to the priests: I am astonished at them that they did not return to praise Thee!" O brothers, we have enough to do to mind our own business, when we feel the grace of God in our own hearts! III. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THANKFULNESS. This man was more blessed by far than the nine. They were healed, but they were not blessed as he was. There is a great blessedness in thankfulness. 1. Because it is right. Should not Christ be praised? 2. It is a manifestation of personal love. 3. It has clear views. 4. It is acceptable to Christ. 5. It receives the largest blessing. In conclusion: 1. Let us learn from all this to put praise in a high place. Let us think it as great a sin to neglect praise as to restrain prayer. 2. Next, let us pay our praise to Christ Himself. 3. Lastly, if we work for Jesus, and we see converts, and they do not turn out as we expected, do not let us be cast down about it. If others do not praise our Lord, let us be sorrowful, but let us not be disappointed. The Saviour had to say, "Where are the nine?" Ten lepers were healed, but only one praised Him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

God looks after "the nine":—I. CHRIST HAS A PERFECT KNOWLEDGE OF ALL UPON WHOM HE CONFERS SPECIAL GRACE AND BLESSING, AND A PERFECT RECOLLECTION OF THE KIND AND MEASURE OF HIS BESTOWMENTS. II. WHILE THE SOLITARY GRATEFUL SOUL WILL BE AMPLY REWARDED BY JESUS, THE MULTITUDE OF INGRATES WILL BE INQUIRED AFTER AND DEALT WITH BY HIM. (*J. M. Sherwood, D.D.*) But where are the nine?—I. There are many men even now who, like the nine thankless lepers, have FAITH ENOUGH FOR THE HEALTH OF THE BODY, or even for all the conditions of outward comfort and success, but have not faith enough to secure the health and prosperity of the soul. That is to say, there are many who believe in so much of the will of God as can be expressed in sanitary laws and in the conditions of commercial success, but who do not believe in that Will as it is expressed in the laws and aims of the spiritual life. St. John's wish for his friend Gaius (3 John 2) is a mystery to them; and it may be doubted whether they would care to have even St. John for a friend if he were constantly beseeching God to give them health of body only in proportion to their health of soul, and prosperity in business only in proportion to their growth in faith and righteousness and charity. II. If we look at the case of these nine lepers a little more closely, we shall find only too much in ourselves and our neighbours to EXPLAIN THEIR INGRATITUDE, or, at least, to make it both credible and admonitory to us. 1. They may have thought that they had done nothing to deserve their

horrible fate, or nothing more than many of their neighbours, who yet passed them by as men accursed of God; and that therefore, it was only just that they should be restored to health. 2. They may have thought that they would at least make sure of their restoration to health before they gave thanks to Him who had healed them. 3. They may have put obedience before love. Yet nothing but love can save. 4. The nine were Jews, the tenth a Samaritan; and it may be that they would not go back just because he did. No sooner is the misery which had brought them together removed, than the old enmity flames out again, and the Jews take one road, the Samaritan another. When the Stuarts were on the throne, and a steadfast endeavour was made to impose the yoke of Rome on the English conscience, Churchmen and Nonconformists forgot their differences; and as they laboured in a common cause, and fought against a common foe, they confessed that they were brethren, and vowed that they would never be parted more. But when the danger was past these vows were forgotten, and once more they drew apart, and remain apart to this day. 5. Finally, the nine ungrateful, because unloving, lepers may have said within themselves, "We had better go on our way and do as we are bid, for we can be just as thankful to the kind Master in our hearts without saying so to Him; and we can thank God anywhere—thank Him just as well while we are on our way to the priests, or out here on the road and among the fields, as if we turned back. The Master has other work to do, and would not care to be troubled with our thanks; and as for God—God is everywhere, here as well as there." Now it would not become us, who also believe that God is everywhere, and that He may be most truly worshipped both in the silence of the heart and amid the noise and bustle of the world, to deny that He may be worshipped in the fair temple of nature, where all His works praise Him. It would not become us to deny even that some men *may* find Him in wood and field as they do not find Him in a congregation or a crowd. But, surely, it does become us to suggest to those who take this tone that, just as we ourselves love to be loved and to know that we are loved, so God loves our love to become vocal, loves that we should acknowledge our love for Him; and that, not merely because He cares for our praise, but because our love grows as we show and confess it, and because we can only become "perfect" as we become perfect in love. It surely does not become us to remind them that no man can truly love God unless he love his brother also; and that, therefore, the true lover of God should and must find in the worship of brethren whom he loves his best aid to the worship of their common Father. He who finds woods and fields more helpful to him than man is not himself fully a man; he is not perfect in the love of his brother; and is not, therefore, perfect in the love of God. (*S. Cox, D.D.*)

Impediments to gratitude:—The moment when a man gets what he wants is a testing one, it carries a trial and probation with it; or if, for the instant, his feeling is excited, the after-time is a trial. There is a sudden reversion, a reaction in the posture of his mind, when from needing something greatly, he gets it. Immediately his mind can receive thoughts which it could not entertain before; which the pressure of urgent want kept out altogether. In the first place, his benefactor is no longer necessary to him; that makes a great difference. In a certain way people's hearts are warmed by a state of vehement desire and longing, and anybody who can relieve it appears like an angel to them. But when the necessity is past, then they can judge their benefactor—if not altogether as an indifferent person, if they would feel ashamed of this—still in a way very different from what they did before. The delivery from great need of him is also the removal of a strong bias for him. Again, they can think of themselves immediately, and their rights, and what they ought to have, till even a sense of ill-usage, arises that the good conferred has been withheld so long. All this class of thoughts springs up in a man's heart as soon as he is relieved from some great want. While he was suffering the want, any supplier of it was as a messenger from heaven. Now he is only one through whom he has what rightfully belongs to him; his benefactor has been a convenience to him, but no more. The complaining spirit, or sense of grievance, which is so common in the world, is a potent obstacle to the growth of the spirit of gratitude in the heart. So long as a man thinks that every loss and misfortune he has suffered was an ill-usage, so long he will never be properly impressed by the kindness which relieves him from it. He will regard this as only a late amends made to him, and by no means a perfect one then. And this querulous temper, which chafes at all the calamities and deprivations of life, as if living under an unjust dispensation in being under the rule of Providence, is much too prevalent a one. Where it is not openly expressed it is often secretly

fostered, and affects the habit of a man's mind. Men of this temper, then, are not grateful; they think of their own deserts, not of others' kindness. They are jealous of any claim on their gratitude, because, to own themselves grateful would be, they think, to acknowledge that this or that is not their right. Nor is a sullen temper the only unthankful recipient of benefits. There is a complacency resulting from too high a self-estimate, which equally prevents a man from entertaining the idea of gratitude. Those who are possessed with the notion of their own importance take everything as if it was their due. Gratitude is essentially the characteristic of the humble-minded, of those who are not prepossessed with the notion that they deserve more than any one can give them; who are capable of regarding a service done them as a free gift, not a payment or tribute which their own claims have extorted. I will mention another failing much connected with the last-named ones, which prevents the growth of a grateful spirit. The habit of taking offence at trifles is an extreme enemy to gratitude. There is no amount of benefits received, no length of time that a person has been a benefactor, which is not forgotten in a moment by one under the influence of this habit. The slightest apparent offence, though it may succeed ever so long a course of good and kind acts from another, obliterates in a moment the kindnesses of years. The mind broods over some passing inadvertence or fancied neglect till it assumes gigantic dimensions, obscuring the past. Nothing is seen but the act which has displeased. Everything else is put aside. Again, how does the mere activity of life and business, in many people, oust almost immediately the impression of any kind service done them. They have no room in their minds for such recollections. (*Canon Mozley.*) *Gratitude is a self-rewarding virtue*:—How superior, how much stronger his delight in God's gift, to that of the other nine who slunk away. We see that he was transported, and that he was filled to overflowing with joy of heart, and that he triumphed in the sense of the Divine goodness. It was the exultation of faith; he felt there was a God in the world, and that God was good. What greater joy can be imparted to the heart of man than that which this truth, thoroughly embraced, imparts? Gratitude is thus specially a self-rewarding virtue; it makes those who have it so far happier than those who have it not. It inspires the mind with lively impressions, and when it is habitual, with an habitual cheerfulness and content, of which those who are without it have no experience or idea. Can the sullen and torpid and jealous mind have feelings at all equal to these? Can those who excuse themselves the sense of gratitude upon ever so plausible considerations, and find ever such good reasons why they never encounter an occasion which calls for the exercise of it, hope to rise to anything like this genuine height of inward happiness and exultation of spirit? They cannot; their lower nature depresses them and keeps them down; they lie under a weight which makes their hearts stagnate and spirit sink. They cannot feel true joy. They are under the dominion of vexatious and petty thoughts, which do not let them rise to any large and inspiring view of God, or their neighbour, or themselves. They can feel, indeed, the eagerness and urgency of the wish, the longing for a deliverer when they are in grief, of a healer when they are sick; but how great the pity! how deep the perversity! that these men, as it were, can only be good when they are miserable, and can only feel when they are crushed. (*Ibid.*) *Instances of ingratitude*:—What then, brethren, is the conclusion from the whole subject? Why, that the man who contents himself with one act of dedication to God's service, however sincere, and there stops; one who is content with a few proofs of obedience and faith, however genuine, with a few tears of godly sorrow, however penitent—content with such things, I say, and there stops; such an one will neither have the approval of his Saviour while he lives, nor the comforts of his religion when he comes to die. Time will not allow me to enlarge on the signs of this spiritual declension, too often, it is to be feared, the forerunner of a final falling away from God. Of such perilous condition of soul, however, I could not point out a surer sign than ingratitude. Every day we live gives back to activity and life some who had been walking on the confines of the eternal world, who had well-nigh closed their account with this present scene; and here and there we behold one resolving to perform his vows, coming back to glorify God, and determined henceforth to live no more unto himself, but unto Him that died and rose again. But why are these instances of a holy dedication to God's service after a recovery from sickness so few? "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?" Again, sometimes we witness the spectacle of a highly privileged Christian family. In the life of the parents is seen a holy and consistent exhibition of Christian

character; the incense of prayer and praise burns brightly and purely on the family altar, and every arrangement of the household seems designed to remind us that God is there. We look for the fruits of this. The parents are gone to rest; they are safe and happy, and at home with God; and of the children, perhaps, there are one or two that follow their steps, viewing religion as their chief concern, making the glory of God the aim of all they say or do, and the promises of God more than their necessary food. But why are the rest of the children living, as it were, on their parents' reputation, content with reaching a certain point in the Christian race, and that point not a safe one—one which leaves them to be saved only by fire, only rescued as brands from the burning—ten indeed were cleansed; "but where are the nine?" Again, we look upon an assembly of Christian worshippers. They listen with interested and sustained attention; the breath from heaven seems to inspire their worship; and wings from heaven seem to carry the message home: here and there is a heart touched, a reed bruised, a torpid conscience quickened into sensibility and life, but the others remain as before, dead to all spiritual animation, immortal statues, souls on canvas, having a name to live but are dead. Whence this difference? They confessed to the same leprosy, they cried for the same mercy, they met with the same Saviour, and were directed to the same cure, and yet how few returned to their benefactor. One, two, or three in a congregation may come and fall at the feet of Jesus, but there were thousands to be cleansed; where are the ninety times nine? But take a more particular illustration. Once a month, at least, in every church, passing before our eyes, we look upon a goodly company of worshippers; they have been bowing with reverence before the footstool of the Redeemer; they have been singing their loud anthems to the praise of the great Mediator; they have been listening to the word of life with all the earnestness of men who were ignorant, seeking knowledge; guilty, desiring pardon; hungry, wanting food; dying, imploring life; but, mark you, when the invitations of the dying Saviour are recited in their ears, when the commemorative sacrifice of Christian faith and hope is offered to them, when mercy in tenderest accents proclaims to every penitent worshipper, "Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest," then many who seemed to be in earnest are in earnest no longer; the memorials of the Saviour's death and passion are spread before them in vain, and all we can do is to look with sorrow on the retiring throng and exclaim, "There were ten that seemed to be cleansed, but where are the nine?"

(D. Moore, M.A.) *Thanksgiving*:—Ingratitude!—there is a fault we all of us easily recognize and heartily condemn. And even in a matter where it would seem almost incredible, even in a matter such as that brought before us by the miracle of the ten lepers, even in the matter of recovered health, there is strange room for ingratitude. Who can believe it, even of himself? who can believe the quickness with which the memory of sickness, and of all its prayerful longings, can be wiped out of our hearts when once the tide of returning strength has swept up again into our veins? It is the natural that so beguiles us. Health is our natural condition, and there is a strange sway exercised over our imagination and our mind by all that is natural. The natural satisfies and calms us by its very regularity. Its response to our expectations seems to give it some rational validity. It is right, for it is customary; and its evenness and sequence smother all need of inquiry. It was this which bewildered us in sickness—that it had wrenched us out of our known and habitual environment; it had thrown us into uncertainty; we could not tell what the next minute might bring; we had lost standard, and measure, and cue; we had no custom on which to rely. And then, in our distress and in our impotence, we learned how our very life hung on the breath of the Most High, in whose hands it lay to kill or to make alive; then we knew it, in that awful hour of withdrawal. But, with health, the normal solidity returns to the fabric of life; the all-familiar walls range themselves around us; the all-familiar ways stretch themselves out in front of our feet; we can be sure of to-morrow, and can count and can calculate, not because the usual is the less wonderful, but simply because it is the usual. We move in it unalarmed, unsurprised, and God seems again to fade away. There are other matters which occupy their attention: the wonder of the feeling of new life; the sense of delicious surprise; the desire to see whether it is all true, and to experiment, and to test it. And, then, their friends are about them, their friends from whom they have been parted for so many bitter years; they are being welcomed back into the brotherhood of men, into the warmth and glow of companionship. "Oh, come with us," many voices are crying; "we are so glad to have you once more among us!" It is not said in the story that they

did not feel grateful: grateful, no doubt, with that vague, general gratitude to God the good Father, with which we, too, pass out of the shadows of sickness into the recovered life, under the sun, among our fellows. They may well have felt genial, grateful; only they did nothing with their gratitude, only it laid no burden of duty upon them; it was not in them as a mastering compulsion which would suffer nothing to arrest its passionate will to get back to the feet of Him before whom it had once stood and cried, "Jesu, Master—for Thou alone canst—do Thou have mercy on me." "When He smote them they sought Him." It all happens, we know, over and over again with us. We are, most of us, eager to find God when we are sick, when the normal round of life deserts us, and by its desertion frightens and bewilders us; but so very few of us can retain any hold on God in health, in work, in the daily life of the natural and the constant. And by this we bring our faith under some dangerous taunts. Who does not know them? The taunt of the young and the strong: "I feel the blood running free, and my heart leaps, and my brain is alive with hope; what have you to tell me, you Christians, with your message for the sick and for the dying? I have in me powers, capacities, gifts; and before me lies an earth God given and God blessed; and you bring me the religion of the maimed, and the halt, and the blind, a religion of the outcast and the disgraced, a religion of hospitals and gaols; what is all this to me?" And the taunt of the worker: "I have will, patience, endurance, vigour; by this I can win myself bread, can build myself a house, can make my way." Those taunts are very real, and living, and pressing: how shall we face them? First, we will be perfectly clear that for no taunts from the young, the successful, and the strong, and for no demands either from the workers or the wise, can we for one moment forget or forego the memory of Him who was sent to heal the broken-hearted, and to comfort the weary and the heavy-laden; and who laid His blessing upon the poor, and the hungry, and the unhappy. No, we will withdraw nothing. But have we no living message for the strong and the young, for the happy and the wise? In what form, let us ask, ought religion to offer itself to these? Thanksgiving! That is the note of faith by which it employs and sanctifies not only the poverty and the penitence of sinners, but also the gladness of work and the glory of wisdom. And has our Christian faith, then, no voice of thanksgiving? Nay, our faith is thanksgiving. Thanksgiving!—this is our worship, and in the form of thanksgiving our religion embraces everything that life on earth can bring before it. Here is the religion of youth, the religion of all the hope that is in us. Let it, in the name of Christ, give thanks. Union with Christ empowers it to make a thank-offering of itself; to bring into its worship all its force, its hope, its youth, and its vigour. Youth and hope—they need religion just as much as weakness needs consolation, and as sin needs grace; they need it to forestall their own defeat, that they may be caught in their beauty and in their strength before they pass and perish, and so be offered as a living thank-offering; that they may be laid up as treasures, eternal in the heaven, where "rust can never bite, nor moth corrupt, nor any thieves creep in to steal." Thanksgiving! It is the religion for wealth, and for work, and for the present hour. It redeems wealth by ridding it of that terrible complacency which so stiffens and chokes the spiritual channels that, at last, it becomes easier for a camel to get through a needle's eye than for a rich man to find his way into the kingdom of heaven. And it redeems work by purging it of pride and of selfishness, and by rescuing it from dullness and harshness. And, again, it is by thanksgiving that religion closes with the natural and the normal, and the necessary. Thanksgiving asks for no change, it looks for no surprises, it takes the fact just as it stands, as law has fashioned it, and as custom has fixed it. That and no other offering is what it brings. Are you fast bound in misery and iron? Give thanks to God, and you are free. The very iron of necessity is transfigured by this strange alchemy of thanks into the gold of freedom and gladness. Nothing is impossible to the spirit of praise, nothing is so hard that Christ cannot uplift it for us before God, nothing so common that He will think it unworthy of His glory. (*Canon Scott Holland, M.A.*) *Words of encouragement to disappointed workers*:—"Oh," says one, "I have had so little success; I have had only one soul saved!" That is more than you deserve. If I were to fish for a week, and only catch one fish, I should be sorry; but if that happened to be a sturgeon, a royal fish, I should feel that the quality made up for lack of quantity. When you win a soul it is a great prize. One soul brought to Christ—can you estimate its value? If one be saved, you should be grateful to your Lord, and persevere. Though you wish for more conversions yet, you will not despond so long as even a few are saved; and, above all, you will not

be angry if some of them do not thank you personally, nor join in Church-fellowship with you. Ingratitude is common towards soul-winners. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Health more than sickness a reason for gratitude*:—Ungrateful to God? I fear so; and more ungrateful, I fear, than those ten lepers. For which of the two is better off, the man who loses a good thing, and then gets it back again, or the man who never loses it at all, but enjoys it all his life? Surely the man who never loses it at all. And which of the two has more cause to thank God? Those lepers had been through a very miserable time; they had had great affliction; and that, they might feel, was a set-off against their good fortune in recovering their health. They had bad years to balance their good ones. But we—how many of us have had nothing but good years? In health, safety, and prosperity most of us grow up; forced, it is true, to work hard: but that, too, is a blessing; for what better thing for a man, soul and body, than to be forced to work hard? In health, safety, and prosperity; leaving children behind us, to prosper as we have done. And how many of us give God the glory or Christ the thanks? (*C. Kingsley, M.A.*) *Human ingratitude*:—A pious clergyman, for more than twenty years, kept an account of the sick persons he visited during that period. The parish was thickly peopled, and, of course, many of his parishioners, during his residence, were carried to their graves. A considerable number, however, recovered; and, amongst these, two thousand, who, in immediate prospect of death, gave those evidences of a change of heart, which, in the judgment of charity, were connected with everlasting salvation supposing them to have died under the circumstances referred to. As, however, the tree is best known by its fruits, the sincerity of the professed repentance was yet to be tried, and all the promises and vows thus made, to be fulfilled. Out of these two thousand persons (who were evidently at the point of death, and had professed true repentance)—out of these two thousand persons who recovered, two, only two; allow me to repeat it—two, only two—by their future lives, proved that their repentance was sincere, and their conversion genuine. One thousand nine hundred and ninety-eight returned to their former carelessness, indifference, and sinfulness; and thus showed how little that repentance is to be depended upon, which is merely extorted by the rack of conscience and the fear of death. “Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?”

Vers. 20, 21. *The kingdom of God is within you.*—*The kingdom of God*:—It is a kingdom of the mind, the will, the feeling, and the conduct. “My kingdom is not of this world,” formed in a material fashion, resting on visible forces, but within, seated in the heart, the intellect, and feeling. Give over, then, straining your eyes investigating the heavens, the kingdom of God is among you; the words will bear this rendering, being almost identical in meaning with the words found in John’s Gospel (chap. i., verse 26), translated thus—“In the midst of you standeth One whom ye know not.” The laws and principles of the kingdom were fully incorporated in Christ, they evolved out of His Person like light from the sun. He informs them that the kingdom is already present with them, that it had actually commenced its operations, and that its spiritual vibrations were then felt. What, then, is this kingdom? 1. It is a kingdom of new convictions producing new conversions and outward reforms. It deals with these three forces of the human character—impulse, will, and habit. Once it gets a proper hold of these powers it makes the character an irresistible force. When religious impulse is grasped by the will and transformed into life, the character is such that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. 2. It is the kingdom of life, or a living kingdom here, rather than an earthly kingdom yonder. It is new life kindling new ideas and forming fresh habits. Sometimes it steals in upon the mind as silently as light. Look at the woman of Samaria, how natural, the new ideas were deposited into her mind, and with what marvellous rapidity they changed the current of her thoughts and the habits of her life. 3. It is a kingdom of new impressions concerning self, God, man, life, time, and eternity. No person ever equalled the founder of Christianity as an impression-maker, impressions of the highest and purest type were set in motion, as reconstructive agencies by Him; and they are still at work leavening society, and they are divinely destined to continue until the whole universe of God is entirely assimilated with the Divine nature, and thus cause righteousness and holiness to shine everlastingly throughout God’s dominion. 4. It is the kingdom of love—love revealed in the light of the Fatherhood of God, God being known as a Father, naturally creates a filial

reverence in man, which at once becomes the mightiest force in reclaiming the lost. Like creates like is a recognized principle in ancient and modern philosophy, as well as in Christian theology. (*J. P. Williams.*) *The kingdom which cometh not with observation*:—These words of our Lord open to us an abiding law of His kingdom; an enduring rule of that dispensation under which we are. 1. It is “a kingdom”; most truly and really a kingdom. Nay, even in some sort a visible kingdom; and yet at the very same time it is—2. A kingdom “which cometh not by observation”; unseen in its progress, seen in its conclusion; unheard in its onward march, felt in its results. Let us, then, follow out a little more into detail this strange combination of what might almost seem at first sight direct contradictions. I. And first see HOW REMARKABLY THIS WAS THE CHARACTER OF ITS OPENING ON THIS EARTH. It was then manifestly a “kingdom.” The angels bore witness of it. Their bright squadrons were visible upon this earth hanging on the outskirts of Messiah’s dominion. They proclaimed its coming: “Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” “Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth, good-will towards men.” Nay, the world felt it. “Herod was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.” The instincts of the unbelieving monarch made him tremble before the King of Saints. It was “a kingdom” which was coming. Yet it “came not with observation.” The King of Israel was born obscurely. Angels appeared to herald Him; yet none save shepherds saw them. There was veil enough over each circumstance of His life to make the dull eye of the world miss the true meaning of characters it could not help seeing. And afterwards, in the life of Christ, it was the same. The world was stirred, troubled, uneasy, perplexed. It felt that it was in the presence of a strange power. An undefined, unknown, yet real presence was with it. But it knew Him not. It was as if some cloud was shed round Him through which the world could not pierce. “The kingdom” was even now amongst men, and yet its coming was unseen. II. And so, AFTER THE DEATH AND ASCENSION OF CHRIST, “THE KINGDOM” WENT ON. Still it came, reaching to every part of the earth, but never “with observation.” III. Once more; SEE HOW THIS IS STILL IN EACH HEART THE LAW OF ITS ESTABLISHMENT. There also none can ever trace its beginnings. Some, indeed, may remember when first they felt its life within them, when first they were inly conscious of its power—though this is far from universally the case where it is most truly planted—but even in these cases, this consciousness was not its true beginning; any more than the first faint upgrowth of the tender blade is the beginning of its life; any more than the first curling of the water is the breath of heaven which it shows: no; life must be, before it is able to look back into itself and perceive that it does live. Being must precede consciousness. And as it is at first given, so does it grow. It is the receiving a life, a being, a breath. It is the passing over us of God’s hand, the in-breathing of His Spirit. This is its secret history; and this men cannot reach. And yet it is “a kingdom” which is thus set up. Wheresoever it has its way, there it will be supreme. It makes the will a captive, and the affections its ministers, and the man its glad vassal. Though it “cometh not with observation,” yet it is indeed “a kingdom.” Now, from this it behoves us to gather two or three strictly practical conclusions—1. This is a thought full of fear to all ungodly men. Depend upon it this kingdom is set up. It is in vain for you to say that you do not perceive it, that you see it not, nor feel it; this does not affect the truth. It is its law that “it cometh not with observation”; that from some it always is hidden. Your soul had—if you be not altogether reprobate, it still has, however faintly exercised—the organs and capacities for seeing it. But you are deadening them within yourself. 2. This is a quickening thought to all who, in spite of all the weakness of their faith, would yet fain be with our Lord. Is this kingdom round about us? Have we places in it? How like, then, are we to His disciples of old; trembling and crying out for fear as He draws nigh to us! How like are we to those whose eyes were holden, who deemed Him “a stranger in Jerusalem”! How do we need His words of love; His breaking bread and blessing it; His making known Himself unto us; His opening our eyes! How should we pray as we have never prayed before, “Thy kingdom come!” 3. Here is a thought of comfort. How apt are we to be cast down; to doubt our own sincerity, to doubt His working in us, to doubt the end of all these tears, and prayers, and watchings! Here, then, is comfort for our feeble hearts. Small as the work seems, unobserved as is its growth, it is a kingdom. It is His kingdom. It is His kingdom in us. Only believe in Him, and wait upon Him; only endure His time, and follow after Him,

and to you too it shall be manifested. (*Bishop Samuel Wilberforce.*) *God's kingdom without observation*.—1. The manner in which the gospel was first introduced was without external show and ostentation. Worldly kingdoms are usually erected and supported by the power of arms. 2. The external dispensation of Christ's kingdom is without ostentation. His laws are plain and easy to be understood, and delivered in language level to common apprehension. The motives by which obedience is urged are pure and spiritual, taken not from this, but the future world. His institutions are few and simple, adapted to our condition, and suited to warm and engage the heart. 3. The virtues which the gospel principally inculcates are without observation, distant from worldly show, and independent of worldly applause. 4. As the temper of the gospel, so also the operation of the Divine Spirit in producing this temper, is without observation. It is not a tempest, an earthquake, or fire; but a small, still voice. It is a spirit of power, but yet a spirit of love, and of a sound mind. The fruits of it, like its nature, are kind and benevolent. They are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, and goodness. 5. The blessings of God's kingdom are chiefly invisible, and without observation. The rewards which the gospel promises are not earthly and temporal, but heavenly and spiritual. They are not external power, wealth, and honour; but inward peace, hope, and joy here, and everlasting felicity hereafter. We will now attend to the reflections and instructions which our subject offers to us—1. If the kingdom of God is now among us, we are all without exception bound to acknowledge it, and submit to it. 2. We learn that it concerns every one, not only to submit to God's kingdom, but to submit to it immediately. 3. We are here taught that we have no occasion to run from place to place in order to find the grace of God, for we may obtain it in any place where His Providence calls us. For the Spirit is not confined to certain places, its influences are not at human disposal, nor do its operations come with public observation. You are to receive the spirit in the hearing of faith. Its influence on the heart is not like an overbearing storm, but as the gentle rain on the tender herb, and the dew on the grass. 4. We learn from our subject that true religion is not ostentatious. It seeks not observation. The true Christian is exemplary, but not vain. He is careful to maintain good works, but affects not an unnecessary show of them. 5. It appears that they only are the true subjects of God's kingdom who have experienced its power on their hearts. 6. As the kingdom of God comes not to the heart with observation, we are incompetent judges of the characters of others. (*J. Lathrop, D.D.*) *The secret workings of Divine grace*.—The workings of God's grace are, for the most part, not only beyond, but contrary to our calculation. It is not said that "the kingdom of God is not with observation," but "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation." And the principle is this—that the greatest and plainest effects are produced by causes which are themselves unnoticeable. God is mounting up to His grand design; but we cannot see the steps of His ascent. If you pass from the history of the Church to any other province in God's empire, you will find them all recognizing the same law. It seems to be the general rule of all that is sublime, that its motions shall be unseen. Who can discern the movements of the planets—whose evolutions we admire, whose courses guide our path? The day breaks and the day sets; but who can fix the boundaries of the night, the boundaries of the darkness? You may watch the departing of summer beauty—as the leaves are swept by the autumn wind—but can the eye trace its movements? Does not everything—in the sky and in the earth—proclaim it—as all nature follows its hidden march—that "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation"? Or, let any man amongst you, read but a very few of the leading passages of his own life, and let him observe what have been the great, deciding events of his history—determining, if I may so speak, the very destinies of his forces. Were they those he anticipated? Did his great joys and sorrows rise in the quarters from whence he expected them to rise? Did not the great circumstances of his life arise from events quite unexpected? And did not those things which he counted little, greatly rise and extend themselves—for evil or for good? And what does all this attest—in providence and in nature—but that "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation"? But we are now led to expect, by what we have read, and what we have seen, and what we have felt, in outward things, that we shall find the truth of the text, also, when we come to the experience of a man's soul; and that the "kingdom of God cometh not with observation." A very pious mother is deeply anxious about the soul of her son. Her fond affections, her holy influences, her secret prayers—have all been bearing to that one point, of her child's conversion to God, for many

years. But have that mother's prayers died, because those lips are hushed? "Has God forgotten to be gracious," when man ceases to expect? Nay—in His own way, and in His own hour, "the kingdom" comes. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Quiet growth of the Church*:—In his other work, the Acts of the Apostles, St. Luke beautifully illustrates these words of our Lord. The Book of the Acts gives us the history of the early Christian Church for about two-and-thirty years after the death of Christ. It may well surprise a thoughtful reader of this book to remark how little progress Christianity seems to have made at the end of that period, so far as the outward life of man was concerned. Nothing amounting to a great social change is here recorded. The Church had not put down heathen sacrifice, nor demolished a single idol temple. Scarcely yet did men's public and social life show any traces of it. The gospel had as yet no local habitation; in looking down upon the crowded dwellings of the great cities of the empire, you would not as yet have seen a spire. Nay, nearly three centuries elapsed after the period described in the Acts of the Apostles, before buildings gave any note of the great moral revolution which had taken place in the minds of men; before the Basilica was diverted from its original purpose as a court of justice to the great end of Christian worship, and in the semi-circular recess, where the prætor and his assessors had sat to lay down the law of the empire, now the bishop and his attendant presbyters were installed around the holy table, to expound the higher law of the kingdom of heaven. But yet, though the visible impression made by Christianity upon human life and manners was thus slight during the period referred to, we may be quite sure that the gospel was then fermenting with peculiar power in the hearts and minds of men. If the kingdom of God did not come with observation, this was no proof at all that it was not within men—that it was not in the very centre of their inner life. If the powers that be, and the wise men after the flesh, at first thought it beneath their notice; if Trajan and Pliny regarded Christians merely in the light of an obstinate and eccentric set of fanatics; this was no proof that a great social revolution was not preparing in the lower strata of society, and eating away, like subterranean volcanic fire, the crust upon which existing institutions stood. The mustard-seed had been cast into the earth, and it was swelling and bursting beneath the soil. The leaven had been thrown into human nature; and its influences, though noiseless and unseen, were subtly and extensively diffusing themselves through the whole lump. Christ's religion was to win its way noiselessly, like Himself. Because its blows against existing institutions were so indirect, because they were aimed so completely at the inward spirit of man, the great men and the wise men after the flesh completely overlooked them, and dreamt not how they were undermining the whole social fabric of heathenism. The scanty notices of Christianity by authors contemporary with its rise have been thoughtlessly made a ground of objection against it by sceptics. The believer will rather see in this fact a confirmation of the Lord's profound word. The kingdom of God was not to come, and it did not come, with observation. (*Dean Goulburn.*) *Secrecy of Divine visitations*:—Such has ever been the manner of His visitations, in the destruction of His enemies as well as in the deliverance of His own people;—silent, sudden, unforeseen, as regards the world, though predicted in the face of all men, and in their measure comprehended and waited for by His true Church. See Luke xvii. 27–29; Exod. xv. 19; Isa. xxxvii. 36; Acts xii. 23; Isa. xxx. 13; Luke xvii. 35–36. And it is impossible that it should be otherwise, in spite of warnings ever so clear, considering how the world goes on in every age. Men, who are plunged in the pursuits of active life, are no judges of its course and tendency on the whole. They confuse great events with little, and measure the importance of objects, as in perspective, by the mere standard of nearness or remoteness. It is only at a distance that one can take in the outlines and features a whole country. It is but holy Daniel, solitary among princes, or Elijah the recluse of Mount Carmel, who can withstand Baal, or forecast the time of God's providences among the nations. To the multitude all things continue to the end, as they were from the beginning of the creation. The business of state affairs, the movements of society, the course of nature, proceed as ever, till the moment of Christ's coming. "The sun was risen upon the earth," bright as usual, on that very day of wrath in which Sodom was destroyed. Men cannot believe their own time is an especially wicked time; for, with Scripture unstudied and hearts untrained in holiness, they have no standard to compare it with. They take warning from no troubles or perplexities, which rather carry them away to search out the earthly causes of them, and the possible remedies. Pride influates many, and self-indulgence and luxury work their way unseen,—like some smouldering fire, which for a while leaves the

outward form of things unaltered. At length the decayed mass cannot hold together, and breaks by its own weight, or on some slight and accidental external violence. (J. H. Newman, D.D.) *The coming of the kingdom to individuals*:—Truly, at a christening we may well reflect that the kingdom of God comes “not with observation.” And if in later years, as too generally is the case, the precious grace thus given is lost and sinned away, and nothing but the stump or socket of the Divine gift remains without its informing, spiritual, vital power, then another change is assuredly necessary, which we call conversion. And what is conversion? Is it always a something that can be appraised and registered as having happened at this exact hour of the clock—as having been attended by such and such recognized symptoms—as announced to bystanders by these or those conventional or indispensable ejaculations—as achieved and carried out among certain invariable and easily described experiences? Most assuredly not. A conversion may have its vivid and memorable occasion, its striking, its visible incident. A light from heaven above the brightness of the sun may at midday during a country ride flash upon the soul of Saul of Tarsus; a verse of Scripture, suddenly illuminated with new and unsuspected and quite constraining meaning, may give a totally new direction to the will and the genius of an Augustine; but, in truth, the type of the process of conversion is just as various as the souls of men. The one thing that does not vary, since it is the very essence of that which takes place, is a change, a deep and vital change, in the direction of the will. Conversion is the substitution of God’s will as the recognized end and aim of life, for all other aims and ends whatever; and thus, human nature being what it is, conversion is as a rule a turning “from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God,” that a man may receive forgiveness of his sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified. And this great change itself, most assuredly, “cometh not with observation.” The after-effects, indeed, appear—the spirit of self-sacrifice, the unity of purpose which gives meaning, solemnity, force to life, the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, in such measure as belongs to the requirements of the individual character. Certainly, when the kingdom of God has come into a soul the result may be traced easily enough, but the kingdom of God cometh in this case, too, at least, as a general rule, “not with observation.” (Canon Liddon.) *Religion is an inward principle, and cannot be forced*:—Men love excitement, and to be able to say, “Lo, here is Christ! or, lo, there!” and they will eagerly run after the preacher who can best minister to this love of excitement. But religion is an inward principle, a work of personal self-denial and effort. Vegetation as a general rule, is more advanced by the gentle dews and moderate showers than by torrents of rain or the bursting of water-spouts; so is the work of salvation, by the daily dews of Divine grace, more than by extraordinary revivals. Let us not disparage revivals, for some truly deserve the name; but let us be assured that the work of God is not confined to them, and we fear is not often in them at all—that churches may have some piety which have no great annual season of excitement—that the best state of things is, where no communion passes without the adding of faithful souls—that all healthy growth in nature and grace is gradual and from within—and that “the kingdom of God cometh not with observation.” (W. H. Lewis, D.D.) *The kingdom within*:—I. RELIGION IS AN INWARD AND SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE. It is, says our Saviour, “within you.” This is a representation which differs from the ordinary opinion of men. If it be within us, then—1. It is not determined by geographical boundaries, by latitude or longitude. 2. It does not consist in an observance of ordinances. This is a representation which accords with what we find in the sacred pages. God forms His estimate of the characters of men, not by their actions, or their language, or their opinions, or by anything of a merely outward nature; but by the temper and frame of their hearts. II. TRUE RELIGION SUBJECTS THE SOUL TO THE AUTHORITY AND REIGN OF GOD. 1. It is spoken of as a kingdom. Now a kingdom is not a scene of anarchy and rebellion; it is distinguished by order and due subordination. 2. But this is not all. Not only is there subordination, but all is under the immediate control of God. (1) God is the author and preserver of that spiritual and Divine principle in which true religion consists. (2) God has appointed all the means by which it is maintained. 3. Mere necessary submission is not enough. It implies a voluntary subjection of the heart to the authority of God. (Dr. Harris.) *The kingdom of God*:—I. The text is a WARNING AGAINST ILLUSORY VIEWS OF RELIGION. There is a form of evil in our own day against which we make a strong protest. There are men in our midst who say, “Lo here; or, lo there.” At last the truth has been discovered. Jacob is

come to Bethel, and has dreamed a marvellous dream. We speak of men who sow seeds of discord through pretended light and holiness. They disturb the peace of the church, and lead the unwary astray. II. The great truth which our text suggests is **THE SPIRITUAL NATURE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD**, yea, the reign of God in men's hearts and lives. The Jews expected a startling demonstration of the supernatural to their material advantage; Christ effected a moral reformation, and laid the foundation for a spiritual commonwealth. We quote the opening sentences of "Christus Consummator," a recent work of great beauty by Canon Westcott: "Gain through apparent loss; victory through momentary defeat; the energy of a new life through pangs of travail—such has ever been the law of spiritual progress. This law has been fulfilled in every crisis of reformation; and it is illustrated for our learning in every page of the New Testament." Such, in a few words, is the basis of that empire of truth which the Son of God founded, and is now enlarging by His Word and Spirit. III. In conclusion, observe how emphatic the Saviour is in directing the attention of His hearers to the fact, **THAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NOT AN EXPECTATION, BUT A REALITY IN THE SOUL**—"the kingdom of God is within you." The seat of the government is in the heart. (*The Weekly Pulpit.*) *The inner heaven*:—It is evident that a "kingdom" necessarily implies a ruling power, and entire subordination to the governing principle. But many minds (might I not almost say most?) have not even this. There is no governing principle at all, unless it be to please self; and a kingless heart must be a weak and miserable thing! There is sure to be disorder, and confusion, and wretchedness—where there is anarchy; and a man's heart is of that character—so impulsive, so restless; so sensitive to influences of every kind; so capricious; so many coloured, that it actually requires a controlling rule which should be a sovereign over it. Nothing else will do. A multitude of rulers could not answer the purpose. They would only weaken and distract. There must be One, and that One supreme, and absolute, and alone. Now it is Christ's promise that He will come into every heart who is willing to receive Him. He comes a King. Now see what follows. Christ was a Saviour before He was a King. He rose from His cross to His throne. "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name. He enters therefore the heart a Saviour-King. What, then, is the first thing which He brings? What is the first act of sovereignty—what the ground of His kingdom? Pardon, peace, and rest to the soul. It cannot be but that the first discovery, and on every fresh realization of such a fact as that, there must be great joy. "Can it be true? O what a happiness! What perfect joy! He is mine and I am His, and nothing shall ever divide us." So peace makes joy; and joy and peace, uniting, make love. Oh! it is a strangely-beautiful "kingdom" where love—love in high authority—love in power—love in awe—issues its mandates; and love, love in expectation, love in perfect accord, love eager on the wing, gives constant echo to every will of His Sovereign's heart. But are there no laws in that "kingdom" of peace and love? The strictest. No man—such is the constitution of our nature—no man could be happy who is not ruled, and ruled with a very firm hand. We all like, we all require, and we all find it essential to our being to be under authority and restraint; and the more imperative the power, so it be just and good, the happier we are. These are the essentials, the very characteristics of the inner kingdom which is now in every believer's soul; only, that which is here, is only the dim reflection of all which is so perfect there; still, it is the same heaven in both worlds. And a man that has once that "inner heaven" in his heart, how independent he is of all accidents, and of all external circumstances. Surely, when death comes, it will be a very little step to that "kingdom" indeed, and to his kindred above. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Where is the heavenly kingdom*:—If you ask me what my definition of the kingdom of heaven is, if you ask me where I place it, I will tell you. Show me a man who is just, who is honest, who is benevolent, who is charitable, who loves his God, who loves his fellow-men; show me such a man; yea, bring him here, stand him by my side, and I care not what be the colour of skin, nor what be his name, or the name of his nation, or what his social standing, or what his financial position, or what be the degree of his intellectual development; I will point my finger at that man's breast, and say: "There, within this man's breast is the kingdom of heaven." If you ask me again to show you the kingdom of heaven, I will say: "Bring me a woman that is pure, that is affectionate, that is loyal to her sense of duty, that is sympathetic and charitable of speech, that is patient, whose bosom is full of love

for the Divine Being and for those of her race with whom she is brought in contact; yea, bring that woman here, stand her by my side; and I care not whether she be Caucasian or African, whether she be of this nation or of that, care nothing about her intellectual development; and I will tell you that the kingdom of heaven is within that woman's soul." Aye, within such a man and such a woman is a kingdom boundless in extent, perpetual in its expression of power, majestic in its appearance, indefatigable in its energy, Divine in its quality—a kingdom of which there can be but one king, and that is God; a kingdom for the sovereignty of which there is but one being fitted—the Infinite Spirit. And this, as I understand it, is the glory of man and the glory of woman: that within them there is a realm of capacity, of faculty, of sense, of aspiration, of sentiment, of feeling, so fine, so pure, so noble, so majestic and holy, that its natural king is Infinite Love. It was to introduce Himself to this realm, to establish His throne and possess it in this kingdom, that Jesus, the Son of God and the Son of Man, alike conjoining in Himself the Divine and the human in harmonious conjunction, representing the sympathy of the lower and the majesty of the higher world, descended to this earth, and is to-day seeking through the operation of His Spirit, entrance to possession. It is over this kingdom within, He reigns, if He reign at all. It is within this kingdom that He energizes. It is out of this kingdom that His glory has to proceed. Not in that which is nominal and technical; not in that which is verbal and formal; not in that which is in accordance with custom and tradition, is the Saviour present. And they who look for Him in these things shall not find Him; but they who search to discern Him in spirit and life, in holy expression of consecrated faculty in the energy of capacities dedicated to God, shall find Him, and they shall find that in these He is all in all. (*W. M. Hay Aitken, M.A.*)

Vers. 22-24. One of the days of the Son of Man.—Mistaken desires for Jesus.—I. JESUS FORESHADOWS A CHANGE OF FEELING ON THE PART OF HIS DISCIPLES IN REFERENCE TO HIS APPEARING. They will desire to see one day a visible appearance of the Son of Man. If you have the spirit of Jesus, if He has come to you so that you know Him to be your Saviour and Friend, you cannot be free from such changes of feeling in reference to Him. No. There come to you times in which you think, "Surely my life in Christ is not pouring on me so clearly and warmly as it might do." You are inclined to murmur out such complaints as, "I cannot see His face, though I have eagerly looked for it; waiting to catch some beams of the wondrous glory resting on it, and be able to say, 'It is the Lord.' I want to feel His strong hand holding me up; but I do not grasp it, though I stretch out mine before, behind, on each side. My prayer this morning was that I might find to-day to be a day for a personal and new contact with Jesus." So there is a sense in which your feeling in reference to Him is somewhat changed. The day has come "when ye desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man." II. JESUS FORESHADOWS HERE THE FAILURE OF SUCH DESIRES FOR HIS APPEARING. "Ye shall not see it." He does not want His people to indulge in vain dreamy longings. He does not want to frustrate hopes that at the bottom might express loyalty to Him, but are mistaken as to the way in which their purport is to be achieved. He could not grant that which would not be for the honour of God; that which would be to the hurt of those who desired only one day of the Son of Man. III. JESUS FORESHADOWS HERE THAT THERE WILL BE FALSE ANNOUNCEMENTS MADE IN REFERENCE TO HIS APPEARING. "They shall say to you, 'See here! or see there!'" From history we find that there has hardly ever been a time of special trouble in the world, hardly ever a time of formality and deadness in the Church, but men have risen up to declare that the Son of Man was just coming, and that plans should be adopted to meet Him. But that is not the kind of expectation I want to warn you against; it is not the one that you are most in danger of succumbing to. But is there not a tendency to gather religious meetings under the idea that because you thus gather together Jesus will manifest Himself? Is there not a tendency to believe that, if you can get up a great organization to carry out a Christian purpose, obtain plenty of money, and seem to succeed outwardly, Jesus is there? Is that not saying, "See here, see there"? Against all that sort of thing His words are meant to bear. You may gather meetings; you don't necessarily gather with Christ. You may get wealth to support your efforts; that is not a proof that Christ approves them. You may find numbers to sustain certain plans; that is no pledge, on the part of those numbers, that they are moving under the leading of Christ. You must learn that there is no power of life in those things by themselves. I do not despise meetings,

wealth, or numbers. There is a certain value to be attached to them; but that value is just equivalent to any number of cyphers, good for something when you put one, two, or other numeral before them. So gather all kinds of people, money, and meetings; but until you put Christ into them they are of no real value. It is the power of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus that is to be desired, not the power of external agencies. Pray that your heart may be brought more and more into sympathy with His, and that you may more and more clearly know that you are living on the Son of God by faith. Then you will not need anybody to point out the Son of Man to you when He comes. You do not need anybody to tell you that there is light in this place—you know it; and when Christ appears, His servants will know it without going by the reports of others, without following any one. We shall know it by the power He Himself will exert. Meantime we have to walk by faith, and not by sight. (*D. G. Watt, M.A.*) *And why not?*—While the Lord was yet on earth the days of the Son of Man were but lightly esteemed. The Pharisees spoke of them with a sneer, and demanded when the kingdom of God should come. “Is this the coming of Thy promised kingdom? Are these fishermen and peasants Thy courtiers? Are these the days for which prophets and kings waited so long?” “Yes,” Jesus tells them, “these are the very days. The kingdom of God is set up within men’s hearts, and is among you even now; and the time will come when you will wish for these days back again, and even those who best appreciate them shall ere long confess that they thought too little of them, and sigh in their hearts for their return.” 1. We are bad judges of our present experiences. 2. We seldom value our mercies till we lose them. I. Consider THE IMMEDIATE INTERPRETATION of the text. 1. Our Lord meant that His disciples would look back regretfully upon the days when He was with them. In a short time His words were true enough, for sorrows came thick and threefold. At first they began to preach with uncommon vigour, and the Spirit of God was upon them. But by and by the love of many waxed cold, and their first zeal declined; persecution increased in its intensity, and the timid shrank away from them; evil doers and evil teachers came into the Church; heresies and schisms began to divide the body of Christ, and dark days of lukewarmness and half-heartedness covered them. 2. These disciples would look forward sometimes with anxious expectation. “If we cannot go back,” they would say, “Oh that He would hurry on and quickly bring us the predicted era of triumph and joy. Oh for one of the days of the Son of Man.” II. AN ADAPTED INTERPRETATION SUITABLE TO BELIEVERS AT THIS PRESENT MOMENT. 1. Days of holy fellowship with Jesus may pass away to our deep sorrow. While the Beloved is with you, hold Him, and do not let Him go. He will abide if you are but eager for His company. 2. Days of delightful fellowship with one another. Let us labour in love, zeal, humility; for a continuance of these all our life long. 3. Days of abundant life and power in the Church. III. A MEANING ADAPTED TO THE UNCONVERTED. When on your death-bed you will be willing to give all you possess to be able once again to hear the voice of God’s minister proclaiming pardon through the blood of Jesus. Emotions formerly quenched will not come back; you resisted the Spirit, and He will leave you to yourself; and yet there will be enough, perhaps, of conscience left to make you wish you could again feel as when almost persuaded to be a Christian. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Days of holy privileges*:—Two kinds and sets of days are here contrasted: coming days and days that are now. The general thought is very natural and very human. It might be said to almost any one at certain periods of life, that he will one day be looking back upon that period with regretful fondness, even though it may not be entirely bright or altogether enjoyable while it is passing. Days of childhood, though many restrictions have fettered, and many faults may have saddened them; days of school life, though often complained of at the time as days of burdensome lessons, arbitrary rules, and irritating punishments; days of early struggle, and hope long deferred, in the practice of a profession; days of uncertain health or variable spirits, while opinion, faith, and habit, are anxiously shaping themselves, and the aspects and prospects of life are in many ways both gloomy and formidable; of all these, and many other examples might be added to them, it might yet be said with great truth by an experienced looker-on to the person passing through them: “Days will come when ye will be desiring to see one of these days over again, and when, alas, you shall not see it! Yes, you may well prize, while you have them, the days that are now, though they may be very far from perfect, either in opportunity or in circumstance; for assuredly you will one day be desiring one of them back—no tears and no prayers of yours will be of any avail to recall it.” When our Lord

said here to His disciples: "The days will come when ye will desire to see one of these days"—"days of the Son of Man," He calls them—"and ye shall not see it," there was a solemnity and a pathos in the prediction far beyond the universal experience of which we have spoken. There was much to make the days of that time far from enjoyable. They were days of unrest; they were days of toil; they were days of anxiety; they were days also of perplexity and bewilderment in spiritual things. They were very slowly and very intermittently realizing very elementary conceptions. They had no such hold of great hopes or great faiths as might have made their heaven all brightness, whatever their earth might be. They were always disappointing their Master by some expression which betrayed ignorance, or by some proposal which threatened inconsistency, which must have made, we should have thought, the very memory of those days of the Son of Man a bitterness rather than a comfort. Yet it is quite plain that our Lord looked upon those as in some sense happy days for them. "The days will come when ye will desire to see one of them, and sorrow because ye cannot." "Can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?" And in that last clause He touches the one point which makes those happy days for them, whatsoever their drawbacks, and whatsoever their discomforts; it was the personal presence of the loved and trusted Lord. In that one respect they would be losers even by the accomplishment of redemption. "A little while," He said, as the end drew on, "a little while, and ye shall not see Me, and verily I say unto you, that then ye shall weep and lament, while the world is rejoicing, then ye shall be sorrowful, though at last your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Yes; when He speaks of a sorrow in separation, and then of a joy growing out of it, He combines in a wonderful and a merciful way the natural and the spiritual, recognizes the difficulty of rising into the higher heaven of faith, and yet points us thither for the one real and one abiding satisfaction. We have had no such personal experiences as these which the text tells of—none of those companionships with Jesus, as He went in and out among the disciples. It is only from afar off that we can contemplate that living companionship. It is only by a remote emulation that we can desire one of those days of the Son of Man. In the hope of catching some distant ray of that glory travellers have sometimes sought the land of Christ's earthly sojourn, if so be they might live themselves back into the days of His ministry and of His humanity. But others, with a truer and a deeper insight, have sought their inspiration in the holy Gospels, have read and pondered those four sacred biographies till they could see and hear Him in them, without those distractions of surrounding imagery and scenery which can but divert the soul from that heavenlier wisdom. "He is risen; He is not here." It is not in hallowed ground, any more than in imaginative dreaming, that we shall find, in this far-off century of the gospel, the best and most life-like conception of what the text calls "the days of the Son of Man." Rather shall we seek to frame our idea of them—first, in the most human and personal contact with such wants and woes as He came to seek out and to minister to; and, secondly, in the diligent study and imitation, so far as we may, of those characteristics and those ministries which, in our own day and generation, make the nearest approach, however distant it must be, to the character and ministry below of the Divine Son Himself. To acquaint ourselves, not as unconcerned hearers, but as sorrowing sympathizers, with the actual condition at our very doors of the toilers and sufferers by whose labour—alas! too often by whose sacrifice—the wealth and luxury, nay, the comforts and conveniences of the higher English life, are made what they are; not to shrink from the contemplation with a sentimental repugnance, but to compel ourselves to take notice of it, and to encourage by word and deed, by giving and feeling, all the serious enterprises by which English manliness, and English philanthropy, and English Christianity, late or early seek and strive to grapple with it. Thus, on the one side, we shall be realizing the days of the Son of Man. For this was the earth which He came to save, and this was the man whom He took upon Him to deliver. True, He did not become Himself the denizen of an overgrown city. He did not take our flesh in the midst of that swarming hive of humanity, imperial Rome. He did not wait for that latest age which should develop into its gigantic proportions such a metropolis as this London. But no monstrous growth and no uttermost corruption was out of the ken and scope of His incarnation. The days of the Son of Man are wherever Christ and misery stand face to face. Whosoever tries to bring Jesus Christ into one lodging-house or one alley of sinning, suffering London, is doing more to realize to himself, and to others, the ministry of the Saviour, than if He

tried to track His earthly footsteps through Palestine, or to picture in vivid imagination the very occupations and employments of the days of His flesh. (*Dean Vaughan.*)

Vers. 26, 27. As it was in the days of Noe.—*Wherein are we endangered by things lawful?*—I. WHEN DO LAWFUL THINGS BECOME SIN TO US? 1. When they become hindrances in our way to heaven, instead of helps as they were intended to be. 2. When our hearts are wrapped up in them. II. HOW WE MAY JUDGE OF OUR HEARTS, AND KNOW WHEN THEY MISCARRY AND OFFEND IN THE PURSUIT, USE, AND ENJOYMENT OF LAWFUL THINGS. 1. When our desire of, and endeavours after, worldly things grow strong and vehement and very eager and impatient. 2. When you have raised expectations and hopes of great contentment and satisfaction from your comforts. 3. When the obedience and willing submission of the soul is brought off to any worldly comfort, and the soul stoops to its sceptre, and the faculties, like the centurion's servants, do as they are bid. Such comforts which are slavishly obeyed are sinfully enjoyed. 4. When the soul groweth very tender and compassionate towards such a comfort, and begins to spare that above other things; then that becomes a lust, and lust is very tender and delicate, and must be tenderly used. 5. When the care, anxiety, and solicitude of the soul runs out after the comforts of this life, saying, "What shall I eat? what shall I drink? How shall I live and maintain my wife and children? what shall I do to get, to keep such or such a thing?" 6. That comfort which thou art not dead unto, neither is that dead to thee, thou wilt hardly enjoy with safety to thyself, or thou wilt part withal but upon severe terms. 7. If, after God hath been weaning us in a more special manner by His word and rod, and taking off our hearts from our worldly comforts, yet the strong bent of the soul is towards them, it argues much carnal love to them that we are not crucified to those comforts. III. WHAT ARE THE SINS THAT ATTEND THE IMMEDIATE SINFUL USE OR ABUSE OF LAWFUL COMFORTS? I will confine myself to the sins in the text. 1. The first sin in their eating and drinking, etc., was sensuality. 2. Pride, ease, and idleness generally go together. 3. Security follows. (*H. Wilkinson, D.D.*) *The revelation of the Son of Man:*—The revelation of the Son of Man is an event which takes more shapes than one in this passage. 1. First our Lord indicates that it implies a period of danger in one place and of the possibility of escape in another place—of safety in the field and not in the house, of safety without, but not within. The revelation of the Son of Man thus takes the shape of a critical period, such as might happen during a siege, or the destruction of a dwelling or of a whole city—where life would be in peril within the walls, but might be saved beyond the walls, and where safety lay only in immediate flight: lingering would be ruin, a quick departure from the doomed city the only way of escape. That is one aspect of the revelation of the Son of Man. And Christ exhorts His disciples, and all who hear Him, to escape with their lives—to escape with the higher life, the better life. Let not the love of property interfere with the love of life; lose all rather than lose life; and let not the love of the lower life interfere with the preservation of the higher life—the life of the spirit, the true life of man. Lose life itself rather than lose that; for in preserving that, all is preserved. 2. Then our Lord speaks of the day of the Son of Man—or, altering the phraseology, of the night of the Son of Man—when He is revealed. In that night there shall be two in one bed—the one taken and the other left; two women grinding at the mill—the one taken and the other left; two men in the field—the one taken and the other left. It is a time of separation which is indicated; the figure of the siege disappears, and new figures take its place. It is a time, though not of apparent outward danger, yet of judgment; but on what principle the judgment takes place, these words do not of themselves determine. For aught that appears, it may be a separation of accident or of caprice; it is a separation, and that is all we know. But when the disciples say further, "Where, Lord?" He utters a proverb which casts light on the judgment and also on the siege and separation: "Whosoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together," a parable that may have been old or new, it matters not; the meaning is plain, and it is twofold. (1) It evidently means that the judgment is one which is true to nature. Our Lord gives the principles on which the judgment or separation proceeds. It is the dead carcass on which the eagles prey. It is the corrupt city, the corrupt State, the corrupt heart, on which judgment is pronounced: the judgment is not one of accident or caprice, but of truth, of righteousness. That is the principle of separation and judgment. And (2) in answer to the question "Where, Lord?"

Jesus gives, I think, another lesson on this matter,—viz., that this revelation of the Son of Man is not a single and solitary act of judgment at some future and far-distant day, but that it is a revelation often made—made, now on a country, now on a people, now on a Church, now on a system. The revelation of the Son of Man is not a thing of time and place, it is an eternal law in the dispensation of God. The judgment of God is proceeding every day; it is proceeding quietly and unseen. It is only now and then that men's eyes are open to behold it, and then the judgment is revealed. But it is not the less true that God's judgment proceeds day by day, whether it is seen and revealed or not. Corruption shall bring about its own recompense—not at a particular time or place; not in some one notable instance years or centuries hence, but wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together. (*A. Watson, D.D.*)

Ver. 32. Remember Lot's wife.—*Almost saved, yet lost*:—Lot's wife—a nameless sinner in a half-forgotten age! I. WHAT IS THERE TO REMEMBER IN THE CASE OF LOT'S WIFE? See Gen. xix. 26. So soon and so sudden is her disappearance from the stage of history. She only appears long enough to disappear again. She is like a spectre, rising from the earth, moving slowly across our field of vision, and then vanishing away. Hence her history is all concentrated in a single point, and that the last. It has no beginning, and no middle, but an end—a fearful end. Its course is like that of the black and silent train, to which the match is at last applied, and it ends in a flash and an explosion. 1. The first distinctive feature in the case of Lot's wife is, that she was almost saved. The burning city was behind; she had been thrust out from it by angelic hands, her husband and her children at her side; the chosen refuge not far off, perhaps in sight; the voice of the avenger and deliverer still ringing in her ears. 2. But, though almost saved, she perished after all. What I want you to observe is not the bare fact that she perished, as have millions both before and since, but that she perished as she did, and where she did. Perdition is indeed perdition, come as it may, and there is no need of fathoming the various depths of an abyss, of what is bottomless. But to the eye of the spectator, and it may be to the memory of the lost, there is an awful aggravation of what seems to be incapable of variation or increase in the preceding and accompanying circumstances of the final plunge. He who sinks in the sea without the hope or opportunity of rescue may be sooner drowned than he who for a moment enjoys both; but to the heart of an observer how much more sickening and appalling is the end of him who disappears with the rope or plank of safety within reach, or in his very hand, or of him who slips into the bubbling waters from the surface of the rock which, with his failing strength, he had just reached, and on which for a moment of delicious delusion he had wept to imagine himself safe at last! 3. Another distinctive feature in the case of Lot's wife is, that her destruction was so ordered as to make her a memorial and a warning to all others. The pillar of salt may have vanished from the shore of the Dead Sea, but it is standing on the field of sacred history. The Old and New Testaments both give it place; and as it once spoke to the eye of the affrighted Canaanite or Hebrew, who revisited the scene of desolation, so it now speaks to the memory and conscience of the countless multitudes who read or hear the law and gospel. II. OF WHAT USE CAN THE RECOLLECTION BE TO US? 1. We, like Lot's wife, may be almost saved. This is true in a twofold sense. It is true of outward opportunities. It is also true of inward exercises. 2. Those who are almost saved may perish—fearfully perish—finally perish—perish in reach, in sight of heaven—yes, at the very threshold of salvation. Whatever “looking back” may have denoted in the type, we know full well what may answer to it in the antitype. Whatever may have tempted Lot's wife to look back, we know the multiplied temptations which lead sinners to do likewise. And this terrible example cries aloud to those who are assailed by lingering desires for enjoyments once abandoned, or by sceptical misgivings, or by evil habits unsubdued, or by disgust at the restraints of a religious life, or by an impious desperation such as sometimes urges us to eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;—to all such this terrible example cries aloud, “Remember Lot's wife”—her escape and her destruction. 3. They who are, like Lot's wife, almost saved, may not only, like her, be destroyed in the very moment of deliverance but, like her, so destroyed as to afford a monumental warning to all others that the patience and long-suffering of God are not eternal. God has made all things for Himself, even the wicked for the day of evil. They who will not, as “vessels of mercy,” glorify His wisdom and His goodness, must

and will "show His wrath and make His power known," as "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." They who will not consent to glorify Him willingly must be content to glorify Him by compulsion. This is true of all who perish, and who, therefore, may be said to become "pillars of salt," standing, like milestones, all along the broad road that leadeth to destruction, solemn though speechless monitors of those who throng it, and planted even on the margin of that great gulf which is fixed for ever between heaven and hell. But in another and a more affecting sense, it may be said that they who perish with the very foretaste of salvation on their lips, become "pillars of salt" to their successors. What a thought is this—that of all the tears which some have shed in seasons of awakening, and of all their prayers and vows and resolutions, all their spiritual conflicts and apparent triumphs over self and sin, the only ultimate effect will be to leave them standing by the wayside as "pillars of salt," memorials of man's weakness and corruption, and of God most righteous retributions. Are you willing to live, and, what is more, to die, for such an end as this? (*J. A. Alexander, D.D.*) *Lot's wife*:—I. HER ADVANTAGES. 1. She had a pious husband. 2. She had heavenly visitors. 3. She had Divine warning. 4. She had seen the wicked punished. II. HER OFFENCE. 1. She acted under the impulse of feeling. 2. She acted under the impulse of unbelief. 3. She acted under a disregard of law. 4. She acted in contempt of warning. III. HER PUNISHMENT. She was punished—1. Suddenly. 2. Seasonably. 3. Righteously. 4. Exemplarily. IV. THE WARNING administered. "Remember"—1. Not to delay. Flee at once. 2. Not to hesitate. Look not back. 3. Not to draw back. Danger is behind. In conclusion: 1. See here a monument of Divine wrath. 2. See here a beacon to warn coming generations. (*A. Macfarlane.*) *Seasonable truths in evil times*:—I. WHAT ARE WE TO REMEMBER ABOUT LOT'S WIFE? Her sin, and her punishment. A sudden and a deadly stroke was dealt her, for her sin of apostasy. II. WHY ARE WE TO REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE? 1. Because her example is recorded for that purpose. 2. For our warning. 3. That we fall not into the same condemnation. III. HOW ARE WE TO REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE? 1. Reflectively. 2. Meditatively. 3. With holy fear, reverence, and adoration. IV. WHAT AND WHEN IS THE SPECIAL TIME THAT LOT'S WIFE IS TO BE REMEMBERED BY US? It is good to remember her frequently; but we are in a special manner to remember Lot's wife in the time of declining, in declining times remember her that you do not decline. Thus our Saviour Christ brings her in for to be remembered by us, that we do not look back, as she looked back. We are to remember her in times of security, of great security. She is to be remembered by us also, in time when God doth call upon His people by His dispensations to go out of Sodom, and make no delay; for so our Saviour also presses it to you, "Let not him that is on the housetop go down," &c., but "remember Lot's wife." God would have no delay then: so when God calls upon a people to come out of Sodom; make no delay, but "remember Lot's wife." Thus we see what the time is. V. WHAT GOOD SHALL WE GET BY REMEMBERING LOT'S WIFE? Is there any good to be gotten by remembering Lot's wife? Yes, much every way: Something in a way of instruction, something in a way of caution. 1. If this story of Lot's wife be true, and do live in our memory, then, why should not we stand and admire, and say, Lord, how unsearchable are Thy judgments, and Thy ways past finding out? Here are four, and but four that came out of Sodom, and yet one of the four were destroyed. God may deliver our family in the time of common calamity, and yet some of our house may suffer. God in the midst of judgment doth remember mercy; in the midst of mercy He remembers judgment. 2. If this story of Lot's wife be true, and do live in our memory, then here we may learn by way of instruction, and see how far a man or woman may go in religion, and yet come short at the last. 3. If this story of Lot's wife be true, and do live in our memory; then you may learn and see by way of instruction; that the best relations will not secure from the hand of God, if we continue evil. 4. If this story of Lot's wife be true, and do indeed live in our memory, then here you may see what an evil thing it is to look back upon that which God hath delivered us from. 5. If this story of Lot's wife be true, and live in our memory; here we may learn by way of instruction, that former deliverance will not secure us from future destruction: she was delivered with a great deliverance, and yet destroyed with a great destruction. 6. If this story of Lot's wife be true, and live in our memory, then here we may learn by way of instruction: it is ill sinning when God is punishing; it is good begging while God is giving: but oh, it is ill sinning while God is punishing. 7. If this story be true, and live in your memory, then here you may learn, that those that are exemplary in sinning, shall

be exemplary in punishing. 8. If this story of Lot's wife be true, and do live in our memory; then here we may see what an evil thing it is to mischoose in our choosing time. 9. If this story of Lot's wife be true, and do live in our memory; then here we may see by way of instruction, that though God will lay out an hiding-place for His people, in times of public calamity; yet if they sin in the way, they may perish or miscarry in the very face of their hiding-place. 10. If this story of Lot's wife be true, and do live in our memory; then here we may learn by way of instruction, that it is possible that a religious family may have a black mark of God's indignation. 11. And the main of all is this. If the story of Lot's wife be true, and do live in our memory: oh, what an evil thing it is to look back, and to decline in declining times. How quick was God with Lot's wife for looking back. She never sinned this sin before; it was the first sin that ever in this kind she committed; and she might have said: "Why, Lord, it is the first time that ever I committed it, and indeed I was taken before I was aware thus to look back: I did not consider well of what I did." But God turned her presently into a pillar of salt; God was quick with her. Why? For to show thus much, God will be quick with apostates. And thus I have given you these things by way of instruction. 12. As many I might give you in a way of caution, but to instance only in one. If this story of Lot's wife be true, and do live in our remembrance; by way of caution, why should we not all take heed how we look back to worldly interests, in the day when the Son of Man shall be revealed, or in this day of the gospel when the Son of Man is revealed. You see what became of Lot's wife for her looking back; and therefore why should we not all of us take heed how we look back or decline, in this day that the Son of Man is revealed? VI. You will say, WHAT SHALL WE DO THAT WE MAY NOT DECLINE; what shall we do that we may so remember Lot's wife, that we may not decline, or look back in declining times? 1. If you would not look back in declining times, shut your eyes and your ears against all the allurements and threatenings of the world. 2. If you would not look back in declining times, consider, in the fear of the Lord, what an evil thing it is to look back. Thereby you lose all you have wrought, thereby you will lose all your losses. There is much gain in losing for Jesus Christ. By looking back you will lose all the losses and the gain thereby. Thereby you will lose the testimony of your own integrity. Yet, saith God, Job held fast his integrity. Thereby, also, you will lose the comfort of those glorious times that are to come. (*W. Bridge*). *Remember Lot's wife:—* I. WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE CONDUCT OF LOT'S WIFE TO LIVE IN OUR REMEMBRANCE? 1. Her sin. (1) Inordinate worldly attachment. (2) Carelessness. (3) Ingratitude. (4) Disobedience. 2. Her punishment. (1) Immediate. (2) Aggravated. Better for her to have perished in Sodom than on the way to Zoar. (3) Signal. A monument before the world of God's power and faithfulness, and His righteous displeasure against apostasy. II. LET US DRAW NEAR AND READ THE INSCRIPTION ON THIS MONUMENT. 1. The danger of apostasy. 2. Past and present mercies are no security for future safety, unless suitably improved. 3. The evil of worldly attachments. III. WITH WHAT SENTIMENTS OUGHT WE TO REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE? 1. With gratitude for our own preservation though we have acted a similar, nay, a more guilty part. (1) She was warned once; we have been warned a thousand times. (2) She looked back; but have not we turned back? (3) She looked back once; we have both looked and turned back over and over again. (4) We have looked back and turned back, although we had her example of warning before our eyes. 2. To increase our salutary fears. (*W. Atherton*). *A woman to be remembered:—* I. THE RELIGIOUS PRIVILEGES WHICH LOT'S WIFE ENJOYED. The mere possession of religious privileges will save no one's soul. Men need besides, the grace of the Holy Ghost. II. THE SIN WHICH LOT'S WIFE COMMITTED. "She looked back." That look was a little thing, but it revealed the true character of Lot's wife. Little things will often show the state of a man's mind even better than great ones, and little symptoms are often the signs of deadly and incurable diseases. A straw may show which way the wind blows, and one look may show the rotten condition of a sinner's heart (*Matt. v. 28*). 2. That look was a little thing, but it told of disobedience in Lot's wife. When God speaks plainly by His Word, or by His messengers, man's duty is clear. 3. That look was a little thing, but it told of proud unbelief in Lot's wife. She seemed to doubt whether God was really going to destroy Sodom: she appeared not to believe there was any danger, or any need for such a hasty flight. But without faith it is impossible to please God. 4. That look was a little thing, but it told of secret love of the world in Lot's wife. Her heart was in Sodom, though her body was outside. She had left her affections

behind when she fled from her home. Her eye turned to the place where her treasure was, as the compass-needle turns to the pole. And this was the crowning point of her sin. III. THE PUNISHMENT WHICH GOD INFLICTED ON LOT'S WIFE. 1. A fearful end. 2. A hopeless end. Conclusion: Suffer me to wind up all by a few direct appeals to your own heart. In a day of much light, and knowledge, and profession, I desire to set up a beacon to preserve souls from shipwreck. I would fain moor a buoy in the channel of all spiritual voyagers, and paint upon it, "Remember Lot's wife." (1) Are you careless about the second Advent of Christ? Alas, many are! They live like the men of Sodom, and the men of Noah's day: they eat, and drink, and plant, and build, and marry, and are given in marriage, and behave as if Christ was never going to return. If you are such an one, I say to you this day, Take care: "Remember Lot's wife." (2) Are you lukewarm, and cold in your Christianity? Alas, many are! They try to serve two masters: they labour to keep friends both with God and mammon. If you are such an one, I say to you this day, Take care: "Remember Lot's wife." (3) Are you halting between two opinions, and disposed to go back to the world? Alas, many are! They are afraid of the cross: they secretly dislike the trouble and reproach of decided religion. They are weary of the wilderness and the manna, and would fain return to Egypt, if they could. If you are such an one, I say to you this day, Take care: "Remember Lot's wife." (4) Are you secretly cherishing some besetting sin? Alas, many are! they go far in a profession of religion; they do many things that are right, and are very like the people of God. But there is always some darling evil habit, which they cannot tear from their heart. Hidden worldliness, or covetousness, or lust, sticks to them like their skin. They are willing to see all their idols broken, but this one. If you are such an one, I say to you this day, Take care: "Remember Lot's wife." (5) Are you trifling with little sins? Alas, many are! They hold the great essential doctrines of the gospel. They keep clear of all gross profligacy, or open breach of God's law; but they are painfully careless about little inconsistencies, and painfully ready to make excuses for them. "It is only a little temper, or a little levity, or a little thoughtlessness, or a little forgetfulness." If you are such an one, I say to you this day, "Take care: 'Remember Lot's wife.'" (*Bishop Ryle.*) A solemn warning:—1. It is a solemn warning, when we think of the person Jesus names. He does not bid us remember Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob, or Sarah, or Hannah, or Ruth. No: He singles out one whose soul was lost for ever. He cries to us, "Remember Lot's wife." 2. It is a solemn warning, when we consider the subject Jesus is upon. He is speaking of His own second coming to judge the world: He is describing the awful state of unreadiness in which many will be found. The last days are on His mind, when He says, "Remember Lot's wife." 3. It is a solemn warning, when we think of the person who gives it. The Lord Jesus is full of love, mercy, and comparison: He is one who will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. He could weep over unbelieving Jerusalem, and pray for the men that crucified Him; yet even He thinks it good to remind us of lost souls. Even He says, "Remember Lot's wife." 4. It is a solemn warning, when we think of the persons to whom it was first given. The Lord Jesus was speaking to His disciples: He was not addressing the scribes and Pharisees, who hated Him, but Peter, James, and John, and many others who loved Him; yet even to them He thinks it good to address a caution. Even to them He says, "Remember Lot's wife." 5. It is a solemn warning, when we consider the manner in which it was given. He does not merely say, "Beware of following—take heed of imitating—do not be like Lot's wife." He uses a different word: He says, "Remember." He speaks as if we were all in danger of forgetting the subject; He stirs up our lazy memories; He bids us keep the case before our minds. He cries, "Remember Lot's wife." (*Ibid.*) Remember Lot's wife:—I, REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE, AND LEARN THE PERILS OF WORLDLINESS. How terrible her fate! What could be more awful? 1. It was dreadful physically. She lost her life. 2. It was dreadful socially. Her husband was made a widower, her daughters orphans. 3. It was dreadful spiritually. She died in the very act of disobedience. Worldliness was at the root of her sin. She looked back with regret at the valuable possessions that were being abandoned. Let us beware. Prosperity is perilous. Gain and godliness are frequently divorced. II. REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE, AND SEE HOW POSSIBLE IT IS TO BEGIN WELL AND END ILL. Some are like certain African rivers of which we have read. Rising in some secluded and rocky upland, they increase in volume and beauty as they flow along. Their course is marked by fertility on either side. But instead of rolling on till they reach the ocean and help to swell its waters, they

gradually sink and are lost in the sand of the desert. Esau; Saul; Solomon; Judas. Let us not be high-minded, but fear. Let us watch and be sober. III. REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE, AND BEHOLD THE FOLLY AND SIN OF DELAY. She lingered and perished. Had she not hesitated, she had not been destroyed. Decision is essential to success in all departments of life. "Despatch is the soul of business." A wealthy man was once asked the secret of his prosperity. His answer was significant: "I always recollect what my father said to me when I was a boy—If you have a thing to do, go and do it." No doubt this had much to do with his accumulation of riches. So, too, salvation must be gone about at once. It is no matter for delay. "No hurry" is Satan's masterpiece. It is the almost universal sin. Hear the confession of an old man:—"When I was young, I said to myself, 'I cannot give up the world now, but I will do it by and by. When I have passed the meridian of life, then I shall be ready to attend to the concerns of my soul.' But here I am, an old man. I feel no readiness nor disposition to enter upon the work of my salvation. In looking back I often feel that I would give worlds if I could be placed where I was when I was twenty years old. There were not half as many difficulties in my path then as there are now." An artist once requested that he might be allowed to take the Queen's likeness. Time and place were fixed. Her Majesty was there to the moment. He was not. When he came he found, instead of the royal lady, her message. She left word that she had been, gone, and should not return. The King of kings offers to give us His image. He wishes us to resemble Him. The Incarnate One says, "Follow Me." But He has appointed the period and the locality in which we are to obtain this Divine likeness—the present world and the present time. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found." (*T. R. Stevenson.*) *The doom of the lingerer*:—I. WITH REGARD TO HER SIN, the state of mind discovered, and the aggravations with which it was attended. Thus, we cannot fail to see in it a low and debased degree of earthly-mindedness, a heart fixed and bent on getting its worldly stuff—ready to incur difficulty for it, danger for it—ay, and the anger of God for it. In this particular connection, the warning of her example seems to be proposed in the text. In that day, when the signs of an advent Saviour are upon you, be not anxious about your worldly possessions. Let the things that are in the house remain in the house, the things that are left in the field be left in the field. "Remember Lot's wife." Again, there was in this sin of Lot's wife the crime of disobedience, with all its actual accompaniments of defiant rebellion and contemptuous unbelief. She had been especially charged that she must not look back, and she did look back; she had been told she must escape for her life, and she loitered even behind her husband. See how many things meet here—the authority of God is spurned, the word of the angel is disbelieved, the wisdom or necessity of the command is questioned, and the impious prerogative laid claim to—"Our eyes are our own; we may look on what we will: who is Lord over us?" Now it is easy to see what gives to those offences against a positive precept their character of deep offending. In the case of offences against the principle or spirit of a law, a treacherous and facile conscience will raise a cavil, and even make for itself excuse to the conscience, as not able to do this, when command takes the form of "Do this" or "Refrain from that." We are then made to feel that we are brought face to face with God; we are confronted with the broad, plain letter of His written law. Room for mistake or cavil or misinterpretation, there is none; we must offend with our eyes open, and cast ourselves headlong into the depths of presumptuous sin. But once more, there was in the sin of the woman much of deep and signal ingratitude. Her life had been one of marked and distinguishing mercies. Solemn warning this, to all of us who have been brought up religiously; for those who have in early life enjoyed great spiritual opportunities: it seems that when such people fall, none fall so low; the light that was in them becomes darkness, and, as our Lord teaches, there is no darkness so thick as that. It is like being borne away to perdition on the wings of God's mercy. II. On the **AWFUL PUNISHMENT** with which the wife of Lot was visited I will only insist as showing how peculiarly aggravated in God's sight must have been the nature of her sin. Her end was marked by all those circumstances of anger and terror which seem to foreclose all hope. First, it was that which we pray against in our Litany as sudden death; that is, not sudden in the sense of being wholly unlooked-for—that may be a great blessing—but sudden as unprepared-for—sudden, as finding us with nothing ready for our meeting with God, with our hearts yet in the world, and our faces turned that way. III. Now to gather up a few PRACTICAL LESSONS from our subject. 1. "Remember Lot's wife" as an example of the folly, the danger, the wickedness of trifling with what

you know to be wrong, of committing little sins, breaking little precepts, and going on to Satan's ground only a very little way. All little sins, all slight tamperings with conscience, all partial returns to once forsaken evil, all compromises with a renounced and repented habit, are as first steps to a hopeless and disastrous fall. Like Lot's wife, we may only intend to look and look, and then turn back again. But we find we cannot turn back; the witchcraft of an evil nature is at work within us; we have seven wicked spirits to contend with now, where, before, we had but one, and so by little and little we are led within the charmed circle of evil till there is no going back and no escaping. 2. "Remember Lot's wife" as an example of the possibility of falling from the most hopeful spiritual condition. How confidently should we have argued of her state; how confidently might she have argued of her own, when, of four persons to be saved out of those vast populations, she was chosen as one. 3. "Remember Lot's wife" as a warning to us that there must be no delays, no haltings, no slackened diligence, in running the race that is set before us. "Escape for thy life"—life spiritual, life temporal, life eternal—lose one and you lose all; and you may lose all by becoming weary and faint in the running. (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *Lot's wife*.—I. Consider, in the first place, **THE HOPEFUL OPPORTUNITY**; or, Lot's wife fleeing from Sodom. It has been thought—and there is considerable reason for the thought—that she was a native of Sodom. When Lot separated from Abraham and went to live at Sodom, we read nothing of his having a wife or children; this is one reason for conjecturing that he married after he came to live at Sodom. Another is her evident attachment to Sodom, which, though to be accounted for on other reasons, may have been all the stronger, if that were the place of her nativity and early life. A third reason is, that Lot's "easily besetting" sin, which was covetousness and love of the world, would probably have tempted him to form such a connection with one of the daughters of Sodom, on account of some supposed worldly advantage. Oh! let not Christians despise the word of warning, whispered by the mere probability that Lot married a native of Sodom—an unconverted and worldly-minded person. But although worldly-minded herself, her husband was a religious person, and she had many opportunities of redeeming her character and turning to the Lord. Yet she rejected them. When the testing-time came, she preferred the world to God. II. **THE SERIOUS OFFENCE**; or Lot's wife looking back. The world is the great clog upon the wheels of piety. III. **THE REMARKABLE PUNISHMENT**. (*J. Hambleton, M.A.*) *Remember Lot's wife*.—Separation is the only way of escape. We must flee from the world, or perish with it. I. **REMEMBER THAT THIS WOMAN WAS LOT'S WIFE**. 1. She was united in the closest possible bonds to one who, with all his faults, was a righteous man; and yet she perished. O ye children of godly parents, I beseech you look to yourselves that ye be not driven down to hell from your mother's side. 2. Being Lot's wife, remember that she had since her marriage shared with Lot in his journeys and adventures and trials. If you cling to the world and cast your eye back upon it you must perish in your sin, notwithstanding that you have eaten and drank with the people of God, and have been as near to them in relationship as wife to husband, or child to parent. 3. Lot's wife had also shared her husband's privileges. She received the merciful warning to escape as well as her husband, and she was urged as much as he to flee from the wrath so near at hand. Thus is it with many of you who are enjoying all sorts of Christian privileges and are yet unsaved. 4. Lot's wife had shared in her husband's errors. It was a great mistake on his part to abandon the outwardly separated life, but she had kept to him in it, and perhaps was the cause of his so doing. I suppose he thought he could live above the world spiritually, and yet mingle with its votaries. II. "Remember Lot's wife," and recollect **THAT SHE WENT SOME WAY TOWARDS BEING SAVED**. III. Remember that though she went some way towards escape **SHE DID ACTUALLY PERISH THROUGH SIN**. 1. The first sin that she committed was that she lingered behind. 2. Having slackened her pace, the next thing she did was she disbelieved what had been told her. Faith may be as well exhibited by not looking as by looking. Faith is a look at Christ, but faith is a not looking at the things which are behind. She saw the bright dawning and everything lit up with it, and it came across her mind—"It cannot be true, the city is not being destroyed. What a lovely morning! Why are we thus running away from house, and goods, and friends, and everything else on such a bright, clear morning as this?" She did not truly believe, there was no real faith in her heart, and therefore she disobeyed the law of her safety and turned her face towards Sodom. 3. Having got so far as lingering and doubting, her next movement was a direct act of rebellion—she turned

her head : she was bidden not to look, but she dared to look. Rebellion is as much seen in the breach of what appears to be a little command as in the violation of a great precept. You will be judged according to the going of your heart. If your heart goes towards the mountain to escape, and if you hasten to be away with Christ to be His separated follower, you shall be saved : but if your heart still goes after evil and sin, His servants ye are whom ye obey, and from your evil master you shall get your black reward. IV. Remember that HER DOOM WAS TERRIBLE. 1. Remember that she perished with the same doom as that which happened to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, but that doom befell her at the gates of Zoar. 2. The worst point, perhaps, about the perishing of Lot's wife lay in this, that she perished in the very act of sin, and had no space for repentance given her. It is a dreadful thing to die in the very act of sin, to be caught away by the justice of God while the transgression is being perpetrated. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Lot's wife* :—I. OF HER SIN—she looked back. What fault was there in that? you will say. I answer—1. There was disobedience in it, because it was against the express command of God, given by an angel, "Look not behind thee" (Gen. xix. 17). 2. There was unbelief in it; not believing the words of the angel, God's messenger, who had assured her in the name of God that He would destroy Sodom, "Hasten hence, lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city" (Gen. xix. 13). Now she would look back, to see whether the prediction and warning were true. An unbelieving heart will easily be perverted and enticed into a rebellion against God, and those that cannot trust God will not be true to Him. 3. There was worldliness in it, or an hankering of mind after what she had left in Sodom; and so this looking back was a look of covetousness, a kind of repentance that she had come out of Sodom; for people are wont to look back who are moved with a desire and remembrance of their former dwelling. So Lot's wife looked back because she had left her heart behind her. There were her kindred, and friends, and country, and that pleasant place which was as the garden of God (Gen. xiii. 10). From thence this woman came, and thither she would fain go again; as if she had said, And must I leave thee, Sodom, and part for ever from thee! Affectation of worldly things draweth us from ready obedience unto God (Phil. iii. 8). 4. There was ingratitude for her deliverance from that dreadful and terrible burning which God was bringing upon the place of her abode. It is said, "The Lord was merciful to him" (Gen. xix. 16). He could not pretend to it out of any merit, and might have smarted, for his choice showed weakness in not resting on God's word : "I cannot escape to the mountain, let some evil take me, and I die" (ver. 19). Only this God required at his hands, that he and his family should make haste and begone. Now, to disobey God in so small a matter was in her great ingratitude. The sins of none are so grievous to God as of those that have received much mercy from Him : "After such a deliverance as this, should we again break Thy commandments?" (Ezra ix. 13, 14). Oh! think what it is to despise the mercy of Christ, who came from heaven to deliver us; and shall it be slighted? II. OF HER JUDGMENT—she was turned into a pillar of salt. 1. It was sudden. Sometimes God is quick and severe upon sinners, surprising them in the very act of their sin; as Lot's wife was presently turned into a pillar of salt. So Zimri and Cosbi unladed their lives and their lusts together (Numb. xxv. 8); and Herod was smitten in the very act of his pride (Acts xii. 23); "The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar" (Dan. iv. 33); "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain" (Dan. v. 30). Thus many times judgment overtaketh the wicked in the very instant of their sin; and God will give the sinner no time. Therefore we should not tempt and presume upon His patience. Surely it is the greatest mercy to have grace to repent; but it is also a mercy to have space to repent. But God's patience must not be wearied. 2. It was strange. For here a woman is turned into a pillar of salt. Strange sins bring on strange punishment. The stupid world is not awakened by ordinary judgments, but looks upon them as some chance or common occurrence; and therefore God is forced to go out of the common road, and diversify His judgments, that by some eminent circumstance in them He may alarm the drowsy world to take notice of His hand. 3. It was shameful; for she is made a public and lasting monument of shame to herself, but of instruction to us. I must show how profitable it is for us to meditate on this instance, even for all those who are called from wrath to a state of rest and glory. 1. That it concerneth such not only to consider the mercies of God, but also now and then the examples of His justice, that "we may serve Him with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Psa. ii. 11). We are in a mixed estate, and therefore mixed affections do best.

As we are to cherish the spirit or better part with promises and hopes of glory, by which the inner man is renewed day by day, so we are to weaken the pravity of the flesh by the remembrance of God's judgments, not only threatened, but also actually inflicted; for instances do much enliven things. Now, what was done to them may be done to us—for these judgments are patterns of providence—and if we would blow off the dust from the ancient providences of God, we may easily read our own doom or desert at least. The desert of sin is still the same; and the exactness of Divine justice is still the same; what hath been is a pledge and instance of what may be. 2. That not only modern and present, but ancient and old judgments are of great use to us, especially when like sins abound in the age we live in, or we are in danger of them as to our own practice. If others have smarted for disobeying God, why not we, since God is impartially and immutably just, always consonant and agreeable unto Himself? His power is the same, so is His justice and holiness. 3. This particular judgment is monumental, and so intended for a pattern and spectacle to after ages; and it is also here recommended by the Lord Himself—"Remember Lot's wife." He exciteth us to look upon this pillar, and therefore certainly it will yield many instructions for the heavenly life. (1) This seemeth to be a small sin. What! for a look, for a glance of her eye, to be so suddenly blasted into a pillar of salt! This seemeth to be no great fault; but it teaches us that little faults in appearance many times meet with a great judgment. There may be much crookedness in a small line; and the matter is not so much to be regarded as the majesty and authority of God that commandeth—as in garments the dye is more than the stuff. But that I may at once vindicate God's dispensation, and enforce the caution, I shall prove—(a) That sin is not to be measured by the external action, but by the circumstances. (b) This woman's sin is greater than at first appeareth. For here was—(i.) A preferring her own will before the will of God. God said, Look not back; but she would look back. (ii.) There was a contempt of the justice and wrath of God, as if it were a vain scarecrow: "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than He?" (1 Cor. x. 22). (iii.) Here is also a contempt of the rewards of obedience, as in all sin (Heb. xii. 15, 16). (iv.) There was an abuse of the grace offered for her escape and deliverance (Rom. ii. 4). All these four things are in every deliberate sin, seem it never so small. (c) Because we think we may preserve the smaller sins for breed, and that God is more severe in remembering these than we are faulty in committing them. Therefore think of and seriously consider that small sins are the mother of great sins, and the grandmother of great punishments. As little sticks set the great ones on fire, and a wisp of straw often enkindleth a great block of wood, so we are drawn on by the lesser evils to greater, and by the just judgment of God suffered to fall into them, because we made no conscience of lesser. The lesser commandments are a rail about the greater, and no man grows downright wicked at first, but rises to it by degrees. (2) This was a sin committed by stealth. As she followed her husband, she would steal a glance, and look towards Sodom; for it is said, "His wife looked back from behind him" (Gen. xix. 26). God can find us out in our secret sins; and therefore we should make conscience, as not to sin openly, so not by stealth. In short, to be an open and bold sinner in some respects is worse than to be a close and private sinner, because of the dishonour done to God, and the scandal to others, and the impudence of the sinner himself; but in other respects secret sins have their aggravations. (a) Because if open sins be of greater infamy, yet secret sins are more against knowledge and conviction. (b) This secret sinning puts far more respect upon men than God; and this is palliated atheism. (3) The next lesson which we learn hence is, that no loss of earthly things should make us repent of our obedience to God, but that we should still go on with what we have well begun, without looking back. "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke ix. 62). From the whole—1. Remember that in getting out of Sodom we must make haste. The least delay or stop in the course of our flight may be pernicious to us. 2. That till our resolutions be firmly set for God and heaven, and there be a thorough bent and bias upon our hearts, and the league between us and our secret lusts broken, after we have seemed to make some escape, we shall be looking back again—"For where our treasure is, there our heart will be" (Matt. vi. 21). 3. That to look back, after we have seemed to escape, doth involve us in the greatest sin and misery. The apostle tells us (2 Peter ii. 20, 21). 4. That if we would not go back, we must not look back. Evil is best stopped at first; the first breakings off from God, and remitting our zeal and watchfulness. He that keeps not a house in constant repair will be in danger of

having it fall down upon him. So, if we grow remiss and careless, and keep not a constant watch, temptations will increase upon us. (*T. Manton.*) *Remember Lot's wife*.—1. Remember Lot's wife, in the hour of conviction of sin. The Holy Spirit strives. The danger of damnation is seen and felt as never before. "Up! flee for your life!" is the voice of the Spirit. Delay, hesitation, casting longing looks back on a life of sin, then, may be fatal. You may lose the golden opportunity. 2. Remember Lot's wife in the hour of fiery temptation. The only safety is in precipitate flight. Escape from the presence of the tempter. To parley, to hesitate, to cast a look at the proffered bait, is all but certain ruin. 3. Remember Lot's wife, when any question of duty is pressed upon you. This woman had no excuse for hesitation or reluctance. A clear, Divine call to duty cannot be trifled with without incurring fearful risk, if not of the loss of life physical, at least life spiritual. 4. Remember Lot's wife, amid the assaults of unbelief. 5. Note what Christ says in Luke ix. 62, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back," &c. (1) He is not intent on the work in hand. (2) His earthly ties and interests are stronger than those which pertain to heavenly things. (3) He has really surrendered himself to temptation. (*Anon.*) *A danger-signal*.—Over sand-bars and hidden rocks in the sea are sometimes placed buoy-bells, which are rung by the action of the waves. So God has set great danger-signals in the sea of time. Such is the story of Sodom and Lot's wife. 1. Remember her surroundings. Sin is often seemingly beautiful and attractive. Beware of the alluring power of evil associations. 2. Remember her danger. This world is a Sodom, and against it has been declared the condemnation of God's law. 3. Remember her warning. Sacrifice everything. Look not back for companions or possessions. Delay not for a better opportunity, for greater conviction, &c. Linger not in the plains of a professed morality. 4. Remember her delay. Procrastination is most perilous. 5. Remember her disobedience. 6. Remember her doom. Disobedience develops into the deadly fruit of death. (*G. Elliott.*) *The danger of looking back*.—There is a story of a high mountain on whose top was a palace filled with all treasures, gold, gems, singing birds—a paradise of pleasures. Up its sides men and women were climbing to reach the top; but every one who looked back was turned into stone. And yet thousands of evil spirits were around them, whispering, shouting, flashing their treasures, singing love-songs to draw their eyes from the treasure at the top, and to make them look back; but every one that looked back was turned into stone. So is every one who is seeking heavenly treasures tempted by earthly music and sinful joys; but whosoever yields is lost. (*W. Baxendale.*) *Punishment of Lot's wife*.—As might be expected, conjecture has been busy as to the manner in which this transformation was effected. There is no harm in such speculations, if they are not allowed to go farther than this, that they only seek to account for a result by natural agents, where natural agents would be sufficient—that they acknowledge the interfering hand of God in the matter, whether He create for the purpose a new thing in the earth, or merely press into His service the means and agency which exist already. In the present instance, it does not seem an impossible thing that judgment upon Lot's wife should have been brought about by natural causes; in other words, that in consequence of her standing still too long, she might get covered with the sulphureous matter which was being rained from heaven, and this, congealing and encrusting upon her person, would make her appear as a pillar of salt. In fact, of the leading features of the phenomenon, traces remain in the physical geography of the neighbourhood to this day. Thus, of the petrifying qualities of the waters of the Dead Sea we have many trustworthy accounts; whilst, as illustrative of the saline property of the waters, one of our great Eastern travellers tells us, that after bathing in them he found a thin crust of salt upon his face, and a similar crust left upon the shore wherever the waters had overflowed. By natural agents or by a miracle, however, it is certain that Lot's wife has been made to stand in the midst of that awful plain, a petrified monument of God's displeasure against backsliders, for upwards of two thousand years; for, "I have seen it," said Josephus, "and it remains at this day." The testimony of later Christian travellers as to the identity of the scene we should have to receive with more caution. Stones with the Jews, we know, were a kind of standing revelation. The story of them was handed down from father to son with a jealous reverence; so that it is not unlikely that among our Lord's hearers were men who, in common with Josephus, had visited this heaven-blighted spot, and on whose minds these words would tell with solemn force—"Remember Lot's wife." (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *Do not run any risk*.—On the coast of Normandy, where Mont

St. Michael stands, the sea goes out about five miles, and comes in like a race-horse. In 1875, two ladies were at some ruins on the sands. "Come away," said the elder, "don't run any risk." "Just let me finish this sketch," replied the other, an English young lady. While she sketched, the tide rushed in, and she was drowned.

Ver. 33. Shall lose it.—*Life through death*.—I. IT IS COMMONLY REQUIRED OF US TO SACRIFICE A LOWER GOOD, IN ORDER TO GAIN A HIGHER. Not always, but almost always. The good things of this world are of several sorts, very unlike one another. Consider the sensualist, the man of pleasure, what is called the man of the world. Now it is idle to say, that the pleasures of sense are not real pleasures. Pleasure is not altogether out of the question amongst higher things, as is proved by such examples as those of Pericles, Cæsar, and Bonaparte; but pleasure *supreme* is simply fatal to a great career. It may give you an Alcibiades, but never a Leonidas. So, too, of money. Here again it is idle to say that money is of no account. All that is higher, and all that is lower, must be cheerfully given up. Money must be the one thing he goes for. This, indeed, is the price of money, as of everything else; and he must pay it. But, at all events, he must give up the lower good. He must not be a man of the world. He must be abstemious in eating; temperate in drinking; temperate in all things. He must rein in his appetite. Good personal habits—habits of self-restraint, must be well established. And so of fame. But neither the scholar, the artist, nor the orator, must be idle, or avaricious. The love of pleasure and the love of money are both of them fatal to these higher aims. Learning grows puny and trivial, when waited on by sensual delights; while the love of gain eats into it like rust. So, too, of art. Growing either voluptuous, or sordid, it falls like an angel from heaven. And so of eloquence. It flies from lips that are steeped in pleasure; it will not quiver in fingers that clutch at gold. The ambition of scholarship, of art, of eloquence, is a lofty ambition, and it will not tolerate much baseness. The scholars of antiquity were, for the most part, severe and temperate men. The scholars of the Middle Ages were the cloistered and ascetic monks. The votaries of art, too, with rare exceptions, have wasted away in martyrdom to their calling. Thus it is that the Temple of Fame keeps a stern sentinel standing ever at her gateway of Corinthian brass. And every comer is challenged with such questions as these: Canst thou live on bread and water? Art thou willing to be poor? If not, avaunt! And so of all sorts of earthly good. Each sort has its price; and may be taken at that price. But two or more sorts may not ordinarily be taken by one and the same purchaser. The lower must be sacrificed to the higher. The coarser must give place to the finer. Such is the well-established method of our ordinary life. Every step of our earthly progress is a sacrifice. We gain by losing; grow by dwindling; live by dying. Our text, it is plain, is but an extension of this well-established method to the entire range and circle of our interests. What is seen to be true of earthly advantages considered in reference to one another, is here declared to be true of all these advantages together, when considered in relation to the life eternal. This world and the next world are set in opposition to each other. Body and soul are put at variance. And all that a man may win of worldly good, it is taught, he must be ready to sacrifice, if need be, in order to save his soul. You may call the demand a hard one; but all the analogies of our ordinary life endorse and favour it. In many dark corners of the earth are sitting men to-day, who have abandoned almost everything for Christ. And their feeling is that they have barely done their duty: that a necessity is laid upon them; that they must suffer for Christ; and by and by die for Him. And the stern warrant for it all is in our text: "He that findeth his life, shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for My sake, shall find it." God be praised, if we, in our sphere, are spared the fullest execution of this warrant. The spirit of it, however, we may never wish to escape. Our hearts are to hold themselves always ready for the fiercest discipline. Personal ease and comfort, houses and lands, friends, reputation, and even life itself, are to be reckoned cheap. We are to hold them in low esteem. So relaxed must be our grasp, that the slightest breath of persecution may suffice to sweep them swiftly and clean away. II. The second law referred to, and the counterpart of the one we have now considered, is this: BY FIRST SECURING THE HIGHER GOOD, WE ARE PREPARED PROPERLY TO ENJOY THE LOWER, AND ARE MORE LIKELY TO SECURE IT. The principle is, that no worldly good of any sort can be well secured, or properly enjoyed, if pursued by itself and for its own sake. This may be seen in our most ordinary life. The man, whose aim is pleasure, may indeed, secure it for a while; but only for a while. It soon falls upon his senses, disgusts

and wearies him. It is easy of proof, that more is really enjoyed, more of mere pleasure is there, among business men, in the brief intervals of business, than among those with whom pleasure may be said to be a profession. Pleasure, in a word, is far sweeter as a recreation than a business. And so of gold. The man who strains all his energies of soul and body to the acquisition of it, never properly enjoys it. He enjoys the activity which the chase imposes upon him; but not the gold itself. He best enjoys gold, because he best knows the uses of it, who is occupied by higher thoughts and aims. It is God's decree, that gold shining useless in a miser's coffers, shall never gladden the one who gathered it. And so also of fame. If pursued for its own sake, the chase is often a bootless one. Selfish ambition almost always betrays itself, and then it provokes men to defeat and humble it. General Zachary Taylor, the twelfth President of the United States, spent forty years of his life in comparatively obscure, but very faithful service, at our Western outposts; receiving no applause from the country at large, and asking for none; intent only upon doing promptly and efficiently the duties laid upon him. By and by events, over which he had exercised no control, called him into notice upon a broader theatre. And then it was discovered how faithful and how true a man he was. The Republic, grateful for such a series of self-denying and important services, snatched him from the camp, and bore him, with loud acclaim, to her proudest place of honour. And this was done at the cost of bitterest disappointment to more than one, whose high claims to this distinction were not denied, but who had been known to be aspiring to the exalted seat. And so through our whole earthly life—in all its spheres, and in all its struggles. To lose is to find; to die is to live. It is so in our religion. We begin by abjuring all; we end by enjoying all. Am I charged with preaching that "gain is godliness"? Not so, my friend. But godliness is gain. It begins by denouncing and denying all; it ends by restoring all. First it desolates; then it rebuilds. Its mien, in approaching us, is stern and terrible. It blights our pleasures; strips us of our possessions; smites our friends; and lays our vaunted honours in the dust. And then, when all is done, when the desolating work is finished, when our very lives are spent and worried out of us, the scene changes as by a miracle, and all is given us anew. God, we find, is not merely *in* all; but He *includes* all, is all. And we learn, assuredly, from our own blessed experience, that "no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." Nay, it is of the very essence of our religion to forget and deny ourselves. Two remarks seem to grow naturally out of our subject. 1. We may learn the great mistake committed by men of the world in their chase after worldly good. They make it an end. 2. We may learn why it is the happiness of Christians is so imperfect. (R. D. Hitchcock, D.D.)

Ver. 84. The one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.—*One taken, and the other left*.—Every great act of God has the effect of dividing, separating, and judging men. So great are the diversities among men, so various their characters, so various by nature, and so endlessly varied by education and habit, that, when God acteth before them in any great or signal way, forthwith those who seemed to be much alike, are found to be really very different. The mercy that is balm to one, is poison to his next neighbour; the trial, which to one is easy and simple, is to his neighbour destruction and inevitable woe. To be born in a Christian country, to be the son of careful and godly parents, to be baptized in infancy, to be trained in the knowledge of God, to have natural abilities, to have education, to have station, or wealth, all these things have this effect of dividing men, and trying their hearts. To those who are obedient, and endeavour to please God, all these things are high blessings, choice gifts of God. Each of them enables a man to render God better service, to please Him better, to do more good, and to make higher attainments of holiness and happiness. But to the disobedient they are all so many downfalls. Every such thing brings out more, and makes more conspicuous and hopeless the inner disobedience; each one of them exhibits more strikingly the spirit of inward rebellion, which, but for these things, might have been comparatively unseen. Illness tries us; health tries us; every day, as it passes, tries us in innumerable ways; tries, and trains us; tries what we are now, and tries whether we will be better; furnishes matter for our judgment, and gives us the means of improvement, so that judgment may not be our ruin. And so we go on being tried, being balanced, and sifted, and searched, thousands of times, many times more than we suppose or conceive, every day of our life. We think of the great trials, but the little ones, which we do not think of, try us still more. It is

very observable that, in the account given of the judgment-day by our Lord in the Gospel of St. Matthew, the doom of the righteous and wicked is made to depend on grounds wholly unexpected by each. They are alike represented as exclaiming, in astonishment and surprise, "Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison?" Full of fears, no doubt, and hopes about things which they do remember, nothing doubting that this or that great act (as they think it), is to be the one on which everything is to turn, for weal or woe, they seem alike struck with astonishment to find that things which they have wholly forgotten, which they neither observed when they happened, nor can recall since, have been laid up in the mind of the Judge, to be the ground of their last and inevitable doom. "Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, or athirst, or sick, or in prison, and ministered, or ministered not unto Thee?" this, I say, is one of the striking things revealed of that awful time. And another is, the alteration which that day shall make; when last shall be first, and first last; when not only the ranks of the earth shall be in many instances reversed, but when the estimations of the earth shall be found to be entirely mistaken; apparent saints taking their place among the hypocrites departing to everlasting fire; publicans and sinners, purified by repentance, their robes washed in the blood of the Lamb, entering, among the blessed, into the joy of their Lord. And the text teaches us a third and different lesson still; how those who have been side by side upon earth, alike in condition, opportunity, and encouragement, to all human sight much alike in mind or temper; not much unlike, perhaps, in apparent earnestness and spiritual attainment, shall then be found, one on the right hand, and one on the left hand; one be taken, taken to joy, caught up to meet the Lord in the air, so as to be ever with Him; and the other left, to woe and despair for ever. Children of one family, bred alike, and taught alike, who have learned to say the same infantine prayers, have known the same friends, read the same books, loved the same pleasures; if one is earnest in his prayers, and, in his secret obedience, serves God faithfully, and the other persists in unfaithfulness and disobedience,—shall it not surely be so with them, that one shall be taken in that day, and the other left? What, then, shall we do? With this reality of trial on us, and this reality of judgment before us, the one more searching than we can trace, the other likely to be more unexpected than we can foresee, how are we to walk to be safe? how to pass through the present trial, how to meet the future judgment? Simply by turning with all our hearts and souls to our duties, and our prayers. We do not need any particular excitements of mind, or any particular glow of sentiments; we want to be in earnest, and the good Spirit of our God, by which we were sealed in baptism unto the day of our redemption, will help us to our safety. (*Bishop Moberly.*)

The great division.—1. The meaning of the text being established, we have next to inquire what the lessons are which it is designed to teach us. When it is considered in relation to its context, it becomes plain that the primary intention of the passage is to denote the suddenness with which the day of the Lord will come upon the inhabitants of the earth. "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only." There will be no perceptible check or change in the current of human affairs to warn us of its coming. Men will be engaged to the very last in the ordinary occupations of life, "as in the days of Noe" and "as in the days of Lot," "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage." Nor shall the great and final partition of good and evil be preceded or prefigured by any partial and gradual severance. Men and women shall be united in their daily tasks, and even in the most familiar intercourse of domestic life, between whom there shall be a great gulf fixed in that day. 2. There is a further lesson which may be derived from the text, and which it is also without doubt intended to convey. It is one which is set forth more or less plainly in other places of Holy Scripture. The children of this world and the children of light cannot be absolutely distinguished, so long as we see through a glass, darkly. Our estimate of another's character is after all nothing better than an inference from phenomena, and our powers of inference are at least as fallible in this as in all other matters. The warmest friendships, the most endearing ties, can afford us no unmistakable guarantee that those with whom we are thus outwardly united, are both almost and altogether such as we are. 3. There is, however, a third inference to which we are naturally led by the words before us, and to which I desire particularly to direct your attention at present. However closely and undistinguishably men are mingled together in this world, however various, minute, and delicate are the shades of character by which they are severally differenced, however hope-

less it may appear, I will not say for man, but for Absolute Wisdom and Absolute Justice, to draw a broad line between the children of this world and the children of light, the text seems to imply, what we are elsewhere taught, that they will ultimately be divided into two and only two classes. But I think the text goes beyond this, at all events in the way of implication. For it not only tells us that such a sharp line as I have described will ultimately be drawn between the evil and the good, but it seems also to tell us that the line exists already, although we may be unable to discern it. For inasmuch as it represents the day of judgment as coming upon men unprepared, discovering them in the midst of their daily avocations, finding persons of the most opposite characters united in the closest intercourse without a suspicion of their incompatibility, and then at once awarding to every man his everlasting doom; is it not reasonable to infer that the grounds of that award exist already, although they are not in every instance cognizable by us? At this point, however, we are met by a difficulty. Our experience of the world and of human life appears to teach us a different lesson. No doubt there are good men and there are bad men on the face of the earth—good men who are acknowledged to be so even by those who are far otherwise, and bad men who are confessed to be so even by themselves. But the great mass of mankind seems to belong to an intermediate and indifferent body, consisting of those who are neither saints nor reprobates, neither fit for eternal life nor deserving of eternal death. The longer the world lasts, the more complicated the developments of society become, the more does this appear to be the case. The visible confusion of the moral world may only serve to cover a clear and well-defined line of demarcation. And, as much, on the one hand, that is outwardly and materially honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report, when traced to its true source would be found to be of the earth, earthy; so we must remember that “the Lord knoweth them that are His”; that, “the kingdom of God,” which “is within” us, “cometh not with observation”; and that as “the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” But we shall do well to recollect, in addition, that we see men ordinarily in a transitional and undeveloped state. The good or the evil that is in them may not have had time to come to a head, or may be overshadowed by old habits which hang about a man like parasites, but which can hardly be said to form a part of his proper self. But as each man’s probation draws near its close, it may be that his character is altogether simplified and stereotyped. Then it is that the awful decree goes forth: “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still.” Mere experience, then, can decide nothing against the teaching of holy Scripture on this point, although it may not actually confirm it. On the other hand, it is worthy of observation, that a great thinker, whose name marks an era in the history of modern philosophy, in endeavouring to frame a religious system *à priori*, was led to a result altogether coincident with the doctrine under consideration. After raising the two following questions: first, Whether man can be neither good nor evil? and then, Whether man can be partly good and partly evil? he decides against the former, in opposition (as he confesses) to the *primâ facie* dictates of experience, upon the ground that moral neutrality in any voluntary act is an impossible conception; and he disposes of the latter, by observing that no act has any intrinsic moral worth, unless it spring from a deliberate adoption of the moral law as our universal principle of action. I have cited this writer’s testimony mainly because he cannot be accused of any undue partiality towards the distinctive peculiarities of the Christian system. But it is not difficult to translate his arguments into Scriptural language. For, on the one hand, it is our Lord Himself who proposes the dilemma, “Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt”; and, on the other, His apostle tells us that “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” (*W. B. Jones, M.A.*) *Divine sovereignty in the death of men:*—

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN GOD’S ACTING AS A SOVEREIGN. 1. His acting as a sovereign implies that He always acts after the counsel of His own will, without consulting the will, or pleasure, or counsel of any other being. 2. His acting as a sovereign implies that He always acts not only without the counsel, but without the control, of any created beings. **II. IN WHAT RESPECTS HE ACTS AS A SOVEREIGN IN TAKING AWAY THE LIVES OF MEN.** Here it may be observed—1. That He acts as a sovereign in respect to appointing the time of every one’s death. 2. God acts as a sovereign in determining not only the time, but the place of every one’s death. 3. God acts as a sovereign in respect to the means of death. 4. God acts as a sovereign in regard

to the circumstances of death. He takes one, and leaves another, under the very same circumstances. He takes one, and leaves another, according to the order in which He has been pleased to place their names in death's commission, regardless of all exterior circumstances or distinctions. 5. God acts as a sovereign in calling men out of the world, whether they are willing or unwilling to leave it. 6. God displays His awful sovereignty by calling men out of time into eternity, whether they are prepared or not prepared to go to their long home. III. WHY GOD ACTS AS A SOVEREIGN IN THIS VERY IMPORTANT CASE. Several plain and pertinent reasons may be mentioned. 1. Because He has an independent right to act as a sovereign in taking away the lives of men. He is the former of their bodies, and Father of their spirits. In Him they live, and move, and have their being. 2. God acts as a sovereign in the article of death, because He only knows when and where to put a period to human life. 3. Another reason why God disposes of the lives of men as a sovereign, in all those respects which have been mentioned, is because He is under indispensable moral obligations to dispose of His own creatures in the wisest and best manner. Application: 1. If God acts as a sovereign in taking away the lives of men, then the aged have great reason of gratitude for the continuance of life. 2. If God acts as a sovereign in taking away the lives of men, then they ought to maintain a constant and realizing sense that their lives are uncertain. 3. If God acts as a sovereign in taking away the lives of men, then they ought to avoid every mode of conduct which tends to stupify their minds, and create an insensibility to the uncertainty of life. 4. If God acts as a sovereign in taking away the lives of men, then it is not strange that He causes so many sudden and unexpected deaths. 5. It appears from what has been said that there is a solid foundation for the most cordial and unreserved submission under the heaviest bereavements. They come from the hand and heart of a holy, wise, and benevolent Sovereign, who has a right to take one, and leave another, and who never afflicts willingly, or grieves the children of men. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *Eternal separation*.—The Rev. Dr. Witherspoon, formerly president of Princeton College, America, was once on board a packet-ship, where, among other passengers, was a professed atheist. This unhappy man was very fond of troubling every one with his peculiar belief, and of broaching the subject as often as he could get any one to listen to him. He did not believe in a God and a future state, not he! By and by there came on a terrible storm, and the prospect was that all would be drowned. There was much consternation on board, but not one was so greatly frightened as the professed atheist. In this extremity he sought out the clergyman, and found him in the cabin, calm and collected in the midst of danger, and thus addressed him: "Oh, Doctor Witherspoon! Doctor Witherspoon! we are all going; we have but a short time to stay. Oh how the vessel rocks! We are all going! Don't you think we are, doctor?" The doctor turned to him with a solemn look, and replied in broad Scotch, "Nae doubt, nae doubt, man, we're a' ganging; but you and I dinna gang the same way." (*W. Bazendale.*)

Ver. 37. Whosoever the body is.—*God's judgments*.—The twofold inquiry *tho*, always greets the prophet is *Where*? and *When*? These two questions are prompted by curiosity and self-interest. The passionate desires of human nature to know the future are testified to by the whole history of superstition and imposture. Even inspired prophecy has been treated in the spirit of this desire. Our Lord teaches us how such questions should be answered, and how such a spirit should be dealt with. He does not answer the "*Where*" and "*When*"; not even in the revelation to His beloved disciple does He do so. I. Observe how in a VERY REAL SENSE HE DOES ANSWER THE QUESTIONS. The answer in effect is this: My judgment shall come upon the earth as come the vultures upon the dead by an unerring and terrible instinct. So truly then as there is ripeness for judgment, and wherever there is that ripeness, there shall come the judgment of the day of the Lord. II. Mark WHAT THESE WORDS TELL US CONCERNING THE GREAT LAWS OF GOD'S JUDGMENT. These judgments are not arbitrary judgments, but are joined to the offence by a natural and necessary law. Where there is ripeness for them there is no escape from them; but they only fall where there is that ripeness. We learn also, that before the last and crowning judgment there must be many lesser and preliminary days of judgment. III. WHERE ARE WE TO LOOK FOR SIGNS OF OUR LORD'S COMING? Not to the heavens far off, but at the dead thing which lies, it may be, at your very feet. Can we discern here and there the corpse that calls and the eagles of judgment that come at its calling. In the case of individuals it is not

wise to judge; but with families, churches, nations, there is no judgment sound but a present judgment. The practical lesson is, "Judge therefore, yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged by the Lord." (*Bishop Magee.*) *The carcass and the eagles*:—In the sphere of human life, that which is the life of things is their use. When that is spent, all things else conspire to have them not only disabled but abolished. On sea and land where man is not, it may be only contingent, though usual, that where the carcass is, there the eagles are gathered together; but where man is, it is certain. Steam and electricity are new ideas, new forces by which man has extended his command over material resources indispensable for his existence. As surely as these new ideas are introduced, there is found to be implied in them destruction as well as creation. A host of things in which there was life because there was use become refuse and old lumber—hand-loom, wooden ships, mail coaches—and with regard to them the question is how they are to be got rid of. A new gun is invented in America or in England, and all the stands of arms in all places of arms throughout the world become lumber until they have undergone a process of conversion which is a process of destruction. Belshazzar's feast is not a spectacle pleasing to gods or men, that small part of mankind excepted for whom the lights flare upon rude riot and excess. It may be a product of civilization and of national struggles and aspirations. It is not exuberant life, but rampant disease and corruption, and as such it is marked for dissolution and destruction. Always when it is at its height there is to be seen the handwriting on the wall, telling that tyranny and oppression have but their day, that they are weighed in the balance and found wanting, that the next thing to heedless excess is destruction. The doctrine of constitutional liberty gains a footing in a country ignorant of it before—the result, if not at once, inevitably is, that institutions, laws, privileges, class distinctions, offices and officers, lose what vitality they had, and with regard to them, as with regard to all that is dead, the question is, what is the swiftest and most effectual method of destruction. In every department of human life the same process is at work, that which lives and grows necessitating the dissolution and removal of that which is useless and corrupt. In this view of it, the process is a necessary part of the fulfilment of the Divine order on the side of progress and improvement. It is beneficent. That which so often makes it seem other than beneficent—and this too has to be recognized as a fact—is the redundancy of vested interests—it is that in so many instances the interests and affections of men and nations are linked rather with what may have been once good than with that which being better is destined to dissolve and to replace it. This is why destruction which goes along with creation is so often a painful and terrible experience. It is not unfortunate or unnecessary for mankind that Belshazzar and his courtiers should have but their day, or rather their night; but, when the handwriting on the wall makes its appearance, the mighty king and his court cannot well be expected to welcome it. There is comfort and satisfaction for a benevolent and thoughtful mind in the reflection that the sanatory arrangements of the universe are as wonderful as any of the other arrangements in it; but for men and nations whose habits and feelings are involved in the existence and perpetuation of what is opposed to them and inconsistent with them, these arrangements cannot but be felt to act often in a harsh, peremptory, ruthless, unsparing manner. It is well, however, to accustom ourselves to look at them in the proper light, namely, as beneficent, not only that we may not miss or misread a great deal which is written for our learning in the pages of history, but that in the changing fashions of our theology we may be always mindful of one thing, to recognize God as not a God of the dead but of the living. (*J. Service, D.D.*) *The gathering of the eagles*:—It will be necessary here to compare the ancient and modern interpretations of the verse—"for whosoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together." 1. The generally received modern interpretation sees here the great law of Divine judgment condensed into one terrible image. The "carcass," according to this, is the putrid carrion; the "eagles" are, strictly speaking, vultures. Thus, to the modern mind, we have here the condensed image of the continuous judgment of God. In hot countries God has so moulded the instincts of the winged scavengers of cliff and peak, that far away, as they wheel and circle over the awful depths into which the traveller looks with reeling brain, they scent the slain in battle, or the bodies that taint the air. So, wherever there is a body of moral and spiritual death—something rotten in Church or State—the vultures of judgment, the punishers and avengers that belong to it in the very nature of things, come mysteriously from their places.

and with boding voices, deepening upon the breezes, gather round the spoil. So with Jerusalem falling to pieces in its last decomposition and self-dissolution. The flap of avenging wings was heard overhead by prophetic ears. The vultures were wheeling on the steaming air, under the vault of the Syrian sky, barking in the far mountain glens, and collecting together to gorge themselves upon the "glittering rottenness." This view is not only rhetorically powerful, but something more and higher. 2. Notwithstanding this, the ancient interpretation represents more truly the Divine thought in the symbol of the eagles and their food. And so this image of the eagle belongs to the glorious Lord and to His Christ. And His people are as His eaglets—nay, themselves eagles of God. Is it not written—"Ye have seen how I bare you on eagles' wings"? And more fully—"As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did bear him." Is not the Church the woman to whom were given "the wings of the eagle, that great eagle," which is Christ? Even here and now, wherever the corpse is, wherever Jesus is evidently set forth crucified, there, mysteriously raised above earthly things, made lofty and royal in their graces, Christ's eagles "gather round" Him who is the spiritual food and the life eternal of all such eagles. The meaning, then, on the whole, according to this interpretation, is as follows: The "carcass"—the corpse of Jesus Christ as crucified—that is the meeting-point of human souls, the centre of attraction in the world of spirits. The Lord of nature, in the Book of Job, says of the eagle, His creature—"she abideth upon the rock, . . . from thence she seeketh the prey; her eyes behold afar off . . . where the slain are, there is she." The Lord of grace adds His application—as the eaglets gather round the corpse, so the souls of men, and especially of the elect, gather round Jesus. Ay, and round Jesus, not always as the eternal Word, not always as in His glory, but in the pathetic beauty of His weakness, staggering under the weight of His cross. Nay more, dying, with the red drops of the Passion upon His brow; dead—nay, fallen in His sacred helplessness. There are mysterious instincts in every heart that turn to Jesus crucified. Keen and swift as eagles for the prey are Christians for the Lord who died. It is the same underlying thought with that noble utterance in the twelfth chapter of St. John. There the few Greeks are to that prophetic eye the first shoreward ripple of the great springtide of humanity which is to break in thunder at His feet. The lifting up a few feet above the soil of Golgotha becomes, by a majestic irony, the elevation above the earth, the centre of attraction for uncounted souls. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." So He seems to promise—"I, if I be fallen upon the earth, the helpless, lifeless, ruined thing which men call a corpse, will yet gather round Me every eagle that clasps the crag, or soars upward with the sunlight in his glorious eye." (*Bp. Wm. Alexander.*) *The gathering of the eagles*:—1. These words have many meanings for us. First we may think of them as referring to the fall of Jerusalem. There indeed was the body, the dead corrupt body of the Jews, who had refused to hear the message of salvation, and had taken and slain the Son of God outside the wall of their fated city. And where the body was, there were the eagles gathered together. That enemy, of which the prophets had spoken long ago, had come, and encompassed Jerusalem in on every side. The Roman eagles glittered upon their helmets, and flashed upon their standards. They set up their banners for tokens, even within the sacred courts of the temple, and so was fulfilled the prophecy of the "abomination of desolation standing in the holy place." 2. Again, we take the words of the text as applying to the hour of death, and first of the death of the body. Whoever has stood at a good man's death-bed must feel that the dying man is not alone, nor allowed in that last hour for any pains of death to fall from God. Where that poor worn-out body lies, there are the eagles of God's host gathered together, strengthening, comforting the dying man, ready to bear his soul as swift as on eagles' wings to Paradise. There is a beautiful fancy of the East which makes Azrael, the angel of death, speak thus to a dying saint:—

" 'Thou blessed one,' the angel said, 'I bring thy time of peace,
When I have touched thee on the eyes, life's latest ache will cease;
God bade me come as I am seen amid the heavenly host,—
No enemy of awful mould, but he who loveth most.' "

So looks the Christian on death, as being a fair and gracious messenger from God, bringing to the captive liberty, and to the weary rest. 'Whosoever the body is,

thither will the eagles be gathered together." 8. These words are terribly true of the death of the godless and impenitent. Julian, the apostate emperor, took for his crest an eagle pierced through the heart by an arrow feathered from his own wing, and as a motto the words, "Our death flies to us with our own feather." So every sinner who dies impenitent knows that the arrow of remorse which pierces him is of his own making, that the dark spectres, which are gathered like eagles around him, are of his own inviting. 4. Once more, and in another and brighter sense, we will take the text as applying to the Blessed Sacrament of the altar; so it has always been understood by the old writers of the Church. One of them says—

"Where the sacred body lieth, eagle souls together speed;
There the saints and there the angels find refreshment in their need.
And the sons of earth and heaven on that one Bread ever feed."

When we kneel at that altar and receive the Body of our Lord, we are not alone. The very word "Communion" teaches us that we are encompassed by a great cloud of witnesses. Not only are we in that Sacrament made one with Christ, and with all true members of His Church, but we join in the work of saints and angels, and they take part with us. Thus we say, "With angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious name." "Wheresoever the body is," wheresoever the Body of Jesus Christ is present in the Sacrament, there will the faithful worshippers be gathered together like eagles, and there too will be high and holy ones present, although unseen by us, making the altar a ladder between earth and heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. (*H. J. Wilnot Buxton, M.A.*)

CHAPTER XVIII.

VERS. 1-8. Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.—The strange weapon—All-prayer:—While Christian was in the Palace Beautiful, they showed him all the remarkable objects in the armory, from the ox-goad of Shamar to the sword of the Spirit. And amongst the arms he saw, and with some of which he was arrayed as he left the place, was a single weapon with a strange, new name—"All-prayer." When I was a child, I used to wonder much what this could have been—its shape, its use. I imagine I know something more about it in these later years. At any rate, I think Bunyan found his name for it in one of the New Testament Epistles: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Eph. vi. 18). It so happens, also, that we have two parables of our Lord given us in the eighteenth chapter of Luke to one end, "that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." One of these parables teaches the lesson of importunity, the other teaches the lesson of sincerity. And it does not need that we draw from this collocation the subtle suggestion that want of importunity and want of sincerity are what weaken the weapon of all-prayer, and render faint the heart of the Christian who wields it. We know that we do not pray always, and that we do not always pray. I. Let us take up this matter of IMPORTUNITY in the outset. At first sight it gives perplexity to some students of the Bible. We must notice that Christ does not identify His Father, the "Hearer of Prayer," with this judge in the parable in any sense whatsoever. The very point of the illustration turns upon his superiority. God is just, and this man was unjust. This petitioner was a lonely widow and a stranger; God was dealing with His own elect. The woman came uninvited; Christians are pressed with invitations to ask, and knock, and seek. The unjust judge never agreed to listen to the widow; God has promised, over and over again, that it shall be granted to those that ask. The judge may have had relations with this woman's adversary which would complicate, and, in some way, commit him to an unnecessary quarrel in her behalf, if his office should be exercised in defence; God is in open and declared conflict, on His own account, with our adversary, and rejoices to defeat his machinations, and avenge His own chosen speedily. Hence, the whole teaching of the story is directed towards our encouragement thus: If we would persist with a wicked judge that regarded

nobody, God nor man, then surely we would press our prayers with God. What is the duty then? Simply, go on praying. II. Let us move on to consider, in the second place, this matter of SINCERITY in prayer, suggested by the other parable. To men of the world it must be a subject of real wonder and surprise, to use no more disrespectful terms, why so many petitions offered by the people of God prove fruitless. To all this, Christians ought to be able to reply that prayer follows laws and respects intelligent conditions, just as every other part of God's plan of redemption does. We are accustomed to say to each other that God always hears prayer. No, He does not. The wisest man that was ever inspired says distinctly, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." And in the New Testament the apostle explains the whole anomaly of failure thus: "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss." For one thing, self-conceit destroys all sincerity in prayer. For another thing, spite against others destroys all sincerity in prayer. Listen to the Pharisee's preposterous comparison of himself in the matter of money and merit with the publican almost out of sight there in the corner. Inconsistencies in life also destroy sincerity in prayer. Purity from evil is a prime condition of success. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*)

The duty of persevering in prayer:—I. OUR DUTY. That which is here inculcated implies that we pray—1. Statedly. 2. Occasionally. There are many particular occasions which require us to pray. (1) Prosperity, that God may counteract its evil tendency (Prov. xxx. 9). (2) Adversity, that we may be supported under it (James v. 13). (3) Times of public distress or danger, to avert the calamity (2 Chron. vii. 14). 3. Habitually. We should maintain a spiritual frame of mind. To pray thus is our duty; "We ought," &c. (1) It is a duty we owe to God. He, our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, has commanded it. (2) We owe it also to our neighbour. The edification of Christ's mystical body depends, not only on the union of every part with the head, but on the whole being fitly framed together, and on every joint supplying its proper nourishment (Eph. iv. 16; Col. ii. 19). But if we be remiss in prayer, we shall be incapable of administering that benefit, which other members have a right to expect from us. (3) We owe it to ourselves. A "spirit of supplication" is as necessary to the soul, as food to the body. Nor can we feel any regard for our souls, if we do not cultivate it. II. THE DIFFICULTIES THAT ATTEND IT. When we set ourselves to the performance of it, we shall find difficulties—1. Before we begin to pray. Worldly business may indispose our minds for this employment. Family cares may distract and dissipate our thoughts. Lassitude of body may unfit us for the necessary exertions. We may be disabled by an invincible hardness of heart. A want of utterance may also operate as a heavy discouragement. 2. While we are engaged in prayer. The world is never more troublesome than at such seasons. The flesh also, with its vilest imaginations, will solicit our attention. Nor will Satan be backward to interrupt our devotions. 3. After we have concluded prayer. When we have prayed, we should expect an answer. But worldliness may again induce a forgetfulness of God. Impatience to receive the desired blessings may deject us. Ignorance of the method in which God answers prayer may cause us to disquiet ourselves with many ungrounded apprehensions. Unbelief may rob us of the benefits we might have received (James i. 6, 7). Whatever obstructs God's answers to prayer, disqualifies us for the future discharge of that duty. (*Theological Sketch-book.*)

The nature and duty of prayer:—I. THE NATURE OF PRAYER. 1. An expression of our sense of God's infinite superiority. 2. An expression of our dependence upon God. 3. A declaration of our obligation to God. 4. A declaration of our faith in God's ability to grant us anything our circumstances may require. There are several things necessary to constitute true prayer, and which form its constituent parts. (1) Faith is one essential. (2) Sincerity is another ingredient in true prayer. (3) Humility. II. We notice THE DUTY OF PRAYER. Prayer is a duty, if we consider it—1. As a Divine injunction. 2. It appears a duty, if we consider God as a prayer-hearing God. 3. It is a duty, if we consider the beneficial effects of prayer. (1) Prayer brings great benefits to ourselves. It brings us into closer communion with Christ. (2) Prayer is a powerful antidote to, and one of the most effectual safeguards against, worldly-mindedness. (3) By prayer we get divinely enlightened. (4) Prayer brings with it advancement in personal holiness. (5) Prayer is a powerful stimulant to every Christian grace. He who lives in the habitual exercise of sincere and earnest prayer cannot remain in a lukewarm, inactive, lethargic state. (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *Men ought always to pray*:—Why? 1. Because the King wills it. Because it is an edict of eternal wisdom and truth, the command of absolute

righteousness and justice, the direction of infinite goodness and love. 2. Because it is an instinct and faculty of our nature, part and parcel of our mental manhood; and as the all-wise Creator has endowed us with the power, and not only the power, but the tendency to pray, we cannot and do not fulfil His will, or rightly use our capabilities, unless we pray. 3. Because it is a privilege, a precious privilege conferred. The maker of the machine can mend and manage it; and He who created us—body, mind, and spirit—invites us to bring our bodily needs, hunger, thirst, aches, pains, and infirmities; our mental cares, griefs, doubts, perplexities, and depressions; our spiritual wants, fears, forebodings, sins, and weakness—to Him in prayer. 4. Because our state and condition is one of perpetual peril, and weakness, and need. The sin on our conscience condemns us, and we cannot undo it. We all get the heartache, and we cannot cure it. We can neither condone our offences, nor lighten our conscience, nor carry our sorrows, nor hush our complainings, nor dry our tears! 5. Because in the infinite love and mercy of God to poor sinners a new and living way hath been opened for us into the presence of God, so that not only doth the sinner gain a hearing, but he has an infinite guarantee that his prayers shall prosper, and his petitions shall be fulfilled. 6. Because our needs, our perils, our personal insufficiency, are “always” with us; because the throne of prayer is always accessible, and the Hearer of prayer is always willing; and because the power and privilege of prayer has a direct connection with the whole sphere of our daily life, and the whole circle of our daily needs. 7. Because no really earnest and reliant prayers can possibly be in vain. We are apt to faint in our petitionings if the gift we seek is long delayed. (*J. J. Wray.*)

Prayer.—The “ought” of Christ outweighs all the objections of infidelity, and is stronger than the adverse conclusions of a material science. 1. Prayer should be constant. “Can we, indeed,” says Augustine, “without ceasing bend the knee, bow the body, or lift up the hands?” If the attitude and the language of prayer were essential to its being truly offered, the command of Christ would seem to be exaggerated. But understand it as the soul’s attitude to God, and it is no exaggeration. “That soul,” says Dr. Donne, “which is ever turned toward God, prays sometimes when it does not know that it prays.” The testimony of the Christian father accords with this. After admitting that formal, oral prayer must have its pauses and intermissions, Augustine says, “There is another interior prayer without intermission, and that is the longing of the heart. Whatever else thou mayest be doing, if thou longest after the Sabbath of God, thou dost not intermit to pray.” Thus the whole life becomes, what Origen conceived the life of the Christian should be, “one great connected prayer.” The importance of constancy in it arises from the place it holds in man’s spiritual life. Prayer is to the soul what the nerves of the body are to the mind—its medium of communication with a world that else were unperceived and unrealized. 2. Prayer should be earnest. There is danger of our prayer degenerating into a dead form, or perfunctory service—worse than no praying at all. The simple remedy is to deepen the desire or sense of need which prompts to prayer, and is the essence of prayer. “If thou wishest not to intermit to pray,” says one of the Christian fathers, “see that thou do not intermit to desire. The coldness of love is the silence of the heart; the fervency of love is the cry of the heart.” This warmth of desire is the product of a clear persuasion of the value of prayer as a means of help and strength. 3. Another quality of true prayer is, patient confidence in God. “Shall not God avenge His own elect which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them.” There are two sure and solid grounds of confidence. One is found in God’s righteous character, by which He is constrained to rectify wrong and establish the right; and the other is found in His positive love for the suppliant. 4. One other quality should mark true prayer, namely, humility. (*A. H. Currier.*) *The necessity of praying always, and not fainting*.—Our Lord Jesus Christ has kindly intimated to all that have business at the court of heaven the necessity of so managing themselves that they still hang on there, and not faint, whatever entertainment they meet with during the dependence of their process. 1. The first thing to be considered, is, our LORD’S KIND INTIMATION OF THIS WAY OF HIS FATHER’S COURT. 1. I shall show the import of Christ’s making this intimation to petitioners at His Father’s court. (1) The darkness that is naturally on the minds of poor sinners, with respect to heaven’s management about them. We may say, as Jer. v. 4, “Surely these are poor, they are foolish: for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God.” (2) Christ’s good-will to the sinner’s business going right there (Exod. xxviii. 29). (3) That our Lord sees sinners are

in hazard of fainting from the entertainment they may meet with during the dependence of their process (Heb. xii. 3). (4) That they that shall hang on, and not faint, shall certainly come speed at length. 2. The weight and moment of this intimation. This will appear, if it is considered in a fourfold light. (1) Jesus Christ, who makes it, has experienced it in His own case. Now, if this was the manner with the great Petitioner, how can we expect it should fare otherwise with us? (2) He is the great Prophet of heaven, whose office it is to reveal the manner of the court to poor sinners. (3) He is the only Intercessor there, the Father's Secretary, the Solicitor for poor sinners there. II. The second thing to be considered, is, **THE WAY OF THE COURT OF HEAVEN, IN TRYING PETITIONERS WITH SOME HARDSHIPS, DURING THE DEPENDENCE OF THEIR PROCESS.** Here I shall give you—1. A swatch of that way; and—2. Some reasons of that way, whereby to account for it in a suitableness to the Divine perfections. 1. (1) Oft-times there is deep silence from the throne (Matt. xv. 23). (2) Oft-times they get a very angry-like answer. The woman of Canaan got a couple of them, one on the back of another: "But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs" (Matt. xv. 24, 26). (3) Disappointed expectations are a piece of very ordinary entertainment there: "We looked for peace, but no good came: and for a time of health, and behold trouble" (Jer. viii. 15). (4) Many a time, looking for an answer, Providence drives a course apparently just contrary to the granting of their petition; so is fulfilled that Psa. lxxv. 5, "By terrible things in righteousness wilt Thou answer us, O God of our salvation." (5) Oft-times the Lord, instead of easing the petitioner, lays new burdens on him: "We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble" (Jer. viii. 15). Instead of curing the old wound, there are new ones given. 2. (1) This way is taken with petitioners in the court of heaven; for thereby God is glorified, and His attributes more illustrated than otherwise they would be. In this view of it, Paul welcomes it in his own case, though it was hard to sense: "And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. xii. 9). (2) Hereby the state of petitioners is tried, and a plain difference constituted between hypocrites and the sincere: "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. xxiv. 13). (3) Hereby the graces of believing petitioners are tried, both as to the reality and strength of them; particularly their faith and patience (1 Pet. i. 6, 7). (4) Hereby believers are humbled, and taught that they hold of free grace. The exalting of grace is the great design of the whole contrivance of the gospel. (5) This way is taken for honour of the word: "Thou hast magnified Thy word above all Thy name" (Psa. cxxxviii. 2). (6) It is taken to make them long to be home. III. The third thing to be considered, is, **THE DUTY OF THE PETITIONERS TO HANG ON, AND NOT TO FAINT, WHATEVER THEY MEET WITH.** We may view it in these things following. 1. They must never lift their process from the court of heaven: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John vi. 67, 68). 2. They must never give over praying, but "pray always." And Satan sometimes plies distressed souls to give up with it, as what they may see they will do no good with, for that God will not hear them. But that is a deceit of hell which ye must never yield to. 3. They must carry all their incident needs in new petitions to the same throne of grace, where the former petition may have been long lying, and still unanswered; and so pursue all together. The latter must not drive out the former, nor the former keep back the latter. It is one of the ways how the Lord keeps His people hanging about His hand without fainting, by sending them several loads above their burden; which loads He takes off soon at their request; and so makes them go under their burden the more easily. These short incident processes, that get a speedy answer, confirm their faith and hope in waiting on for the answer of the main. 4. They must continue in the faith of the promise, never quit the gripe of it; but trust and believe that it shall certainly be accomplished, though the wheels of providence should seem to drive out over it and in over it (Rom. iv. 19, 20). Consider—1. If ye faint and give over, your suit is lost, ye have given up with it. 2. He is well worth the waiting on. (1) Though He is infinitely above us, He has waited long on us. (2) The longer you are called to wait for a mercy, ye will readily find it the more valuable when it comes. (3) His time will be found the due time (Gal. vi. 9); the best chosen time for the mercy's coming; witness the time of Isaac's birth. (4) Ye shall be sure of some blessed offallings, while ye wait on

(Psa. xxvii. 14). 4. They have waited long, that have lost all, by not having patience to wait a little longer (Exod. xxxii. ; 1 Sam. xiii. 8, 10). Therefore "let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James i. 4) ; "for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not" (Gal. vi. 9). (*T. Boston, D.D.*) *Petitioners at the court of heaven encouraged ; or, the happy issue of praying always, and not fainting :—*I. First, I SHALL SHOW WHAT IS THAT TREATMENT PETITIONERS MAY MEET WITH AT THE COURT OF HEAVEN, UNDER WHICH THEY WILL BE IN HAZARD OF FAINTING. I mentioned several particulars at another occasion ; I offer now only three things in general. 1. The weight and pressure of their heavy case itself, whatever it is, may be long continued, notwithstanding all their addresses for help. 2. There may be no appearance of relief (Psa. lxxiv. 9). 3. They may get incident weights laid on them, as a load above their burden (Psa. lxi. 26). These are like drops poured into a full cup, ready to cause it run over ; like smart touches on a broken leg, inclining one readily to faint. II. The second thing to be spoke to, is, WHY PETITIONERS ARE IN HAZARD OF FAINTING FROM SUCH TREATMENT AT THE COURT OF HEAVEN. 1. Natural weakness. "All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field" (Isa. xl. 6). On this very view the Lord "pities His children" (Psa. ciii. 13, 14). 2. Conscience of guilt : "My wounds stink, and are corrupt ; because of my foolishness" (Psa. xxxviii. 5, 6). Guilt is a mother of fears, and fears cause fainting. 3. Unacquaintedness with the methods of sovereignty : "Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known" (Psa. lxxvii. 19). 4. A strong bias to unbelief and walking by sense, quite contrary to our duty and interest (2 Cor. v. 7). We are apt to be impressed more with what we see and feel in Providence, than what we hear from the Word. III. The third thing to be considered is, WHEREFORE THE LORD GIVES SUCH TREATMENT TO ANY OF HIS PETITIONERS. Negatively. 1. It is not for mere will and pleasure. Satan will be ready to suggest this, and pose the party with such questions as these, For what use is all this delay ? 2. It is not because He has no pity on you, nor concern for you under your burden. 3. It is not to signify to you that you should give it over, and trouble Him no more with your petition ; as the hasty unbelieving heart is ready to take it, and to give over duty because there is no sensible appearance of success : "I said I will not make mention of Him nor speak any more in His name" (Jer. xx. 9). 4. Lastly, It is not because He is resolved not to hear you at any rate, cry as long as ye will. But positively, in general, it is for holy, wise, becoming ends ; it is necessary for His glory and your case. But particularly—1. It is for the honour of the man Christ. It contributes to it—(1) In that thereby the petitioners are conformed to His image, in the suffering part thereof. (2) Thereby He gets the more employment as the great Intercessor, and is more earnestly applied to than otherwise He would be. Longsome pleas give the advocates much ado ; and longsome processes at the court of heaven bring much business to the Mediator, and so much honour. (3) It affords Him the most signal occasion of displaying His power in combating with and baffling the old serpent, next to that He had on the cross (2 Cor. xii. 9). 2. To magnify the promise. 3. To keep up the mercy, till that time come, that, all things considered, will be the absolutely best time for bestowing it (John xi. 14, 15). IV. The fourth thing to be spoke to is, WHAT IS THE IMPORT OF THIS INTIMATION MADE FOR THIS END ? It imports—1. That sinners are ready to take delays at the court of heaven for denials. 2. That importunity and resolute hanging on, and repeated addresses for the supply of the same need, are very welcome and acceptable to Christ and His Father. There is no fear of excess here ; the oftener ye come, the more resolute ye are in your hanging on, the more welcome. 3. That the faith of being heard at length, is necessary to keep one hanging on without fainting (Psa. xxvii. 13). 4. That the hearing to be got at length at the court of heaven is well worth the waiting on, be it ever so long. It will more than counterbalance all the fatigue of the process, that is kept longest in dependence. V. The fifth thing in the method is, THE CERTAINTY OF SUCH PETITIONERS BEING HEARD AT LENGTH. 1. They are doubtless God's own children, elect believers, whatever they think of themselves (Luke xvii. 7). 2. The nature, name, and promise of God, joins to insure it. He is good and gracious in His nature (Exod. xxxiv. 6-9). 3. Such prayers are the product of His own Spirit in them, and therefore He cannot miss to be heard (James v. 16). 4. Our Lord Jesus has given His word on it, and so has impawned His honour they shall be heard : "I tell you that He will avenge them speedily." VI. Sixthly, How THEY SHALL BE HEARD TO THEIR HEART'S CONTENT. 1. They shall at length see that their prayers

have been accepted. I do not say they shall at length be accepted, but they shall see they have been so. 2. They shall get an answer of their petitions to their heart's satisfaction (Matt. xv. 28). "The needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever" (Psa. ix. 18). 3. They shall be fully satisfied as to the long delay, and the whole steps of the procedure, however perplexing they were before (Rev. xv. 3). 4. They shall get it with increase according to the time they waited on, and the hardships they sustained during the dependence of the process. The fruit of the promise, the longer it is a-ripening, the more bulky it is. 5. Lastly, their spiritual enemies that flew thick and strong about them in the time of the darkness, shall be scattered at the appearance of this light (1 Sam. ii. 5). VII. Seventhly, How it shall be speedily, notwithstanding the long delay. 1. It shall be speedily in respect of the weight and value of it when it comes: so that the believer looking on the return of his petition, with an eye of faith perceiving the worth of it, may wonder it is come upon so short on-waiting (2 Cor. iv. 17). 2. It shall come in the most seasonable nick of time it can come in (Gal. vi. 9), when it may come to the best advantage for the honour of God and their good: and that which comes in the best season, comes speedily. To everything there is a season; so fools' haste is no speed. 3. It shall come as soon as they are prepared for it (Psa. x. 17). 4. It shall not tarry one moment beyond the due and appointed time (Hab. ii. 3). 5. Lastly, it will be surprising, as a glaring light to one brought out of a dungeon, though he was expecting it. (*Ibid.*)

The necessity of prayer:—I. With regard to the necessity of prayer, THE GERM OF THIS AS OF OTHER REVEALED DOCTRINES, IS TO BE FOUND IN OUR NATURE, and affords one illustration of the truth of that profound exclamation, "O testimony of a soul, by nature Christian!" Of moral truth there is an inward engraving, a light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. "The virtues," says a modern writer, "were like plants half developed in some gloomy shade, till Christ poured His sunshine upon them, and made them flourish with luxuriance." It is important, then, to ground the necessity of prayer on the dictates of nature as well as on the teaching of Revelation, thereby resting it on a double authority, each of which lends support to the other. For anything to be original in our nature, it must possess certain properties; in looking back to the beginning of our race it will present itself without any external origin, and it will continue to exist under conditions most diverse and at all times. We examine, then, the history of the past, we take up the book which contains the first records of our race in order to discover whether this communing with God existed from the first—to see what the first human souls did. All the elements of prayer were present in Adam's intercourse with his Maker; man, rational and dependent; God, Almighty, Omniscient, and Good; and—communications between the two. We trace the instinct of prayer continuing in fallen man, else it might have been supposed that it was a part of his supernatural equipment, and had no foundation in his natural life. In Adam's sons this instinct survived; Cain and Abel offered sacrifices, and sacrifices are the outward expression of prayer; there was an ascent of the mind to God, a real ascent at least in one case, for "by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." In an unfallen state, the instinct of the soul was to turn to the Author of its life, with joy and thankfulness; in a fallen state, the instinct of the soul is to turn to Him through its need of pardon and its sense of weakness; but in both states there is the instinct to turn to Him, though the leading reasons for doing so may be different. Looking back, then, into the past by the light of the only record which can safely guide us, we find the practice of prayer from the first without any external command or origin, and therefore it preserves one mark of an instinct of nature. But an instinct to be acknowledged must not only be able to claim antiquity on its side but also universality. That which is a genuine part of human nature will always be a part of human nature. If that which marked human life in its earlier stages, disappears in times of advanced civilization and culture, it may be doubted whether it was a pure instinct of our nature, and be attributed either on the one side to an original revelation or on the other to a defective or barbarous condition. It must, however, be admitted that in matters of religion, the mark of antiquity in an instinct has a special value; we can see in it "natural religion" before it has been tampered with. If we want to learn the habits of an animal, we must see it in its native freedom, and not only after it has been trained and domesticated. The instinct of prayer, however, does not lack the second property, universality; we find it both in the highest and lowest states of civilization, in places and races widely sundered both in position

and circumstance. If we examine the practices of barbarous nations; if we turn to the ancient religions of the East; if we look at Greece and Rome in the plenitude of their intellectual power, we find that in some form or shape the necessity of prayer and homage to a superior Power is admitted, and in no nation is the instinct entirely obliterated. In the root of human nature there is a sense of dependency, and a sense of guilt; natural religion is based on these two, the correlatives of which are prayer and atonement—the actions respectively proper to the frail, and to the sinful. It is useless to speak of the instinct of prayer as of something imported into our nature: that which is simply imported does not make its home so fixed and sure, that no lapse of time or change of circumstances has the power to dislodge it. I have dwelt at some length on the instinctive character of prayer, because on it I first ground its obligation; we ought to pray out of deference to an instinct with which God has endowed us, for by our higher intuitions and instincts He expresses His will, and to neglect to act in accordance with them, is to disobey His voice within us. Moreover, this instinct of prayer is an imperious one; it is one which will assert itself, even when it has been set aside, and its presence denied. There are moments in life when men are superior to their own principles, and human systems fail to silence the deep cry of the heart; when men pray who have denied the power of prayer. “That men *ought* always to pray,” then, is the teaching of nature, and prayer as a matter of natural religion is an express duty.

II. We pass now from the sphere of the natural to the super-natural, from nature to grace, TO FIND ANOTHER BASIS FOR THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER. Prayer meets us with a two-fold claim in the domain of revealed religion; it is necessary as a means of grace, it is necessary also as a fulfilment of an express command of God; these are two sides, the one objective, the other subjective, of the same truth. It will be observed, that the necessity of prayer viewed in this connection is derived from the prior necessity of grace. “Every man is held to pray in order to obtain spiritual goods, which are not given, except from heaven; wherefore they are not able to be procured in any other way but by being thus sought for.” In the New Testament, that grace is a necessity for the supernatural life is an elemental truth. Grace is to that life what the water is to the life of the fish, or the air to our natural life—something absolutely indispensable. “Being justified freely by His grace.” “By grace ye are saved.” “By the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain.” “Grow in grace.” “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it.” In following the operations of grace from the commencement of the spiritual life to its end, five effects have been enumerated—it heals the soul, it produces a good will, it enables the good which was willed to be brought about in action, it makes perseverance in good possible, it leads to glory. Thus grace is, from first to last, the invisible nourishment of the soul’s life, and prayer is the means in man’s own power of gaining grace; it is through prayer that the different effects of grace are wrought in us. We ask God for spiritual healing—“Heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee.” “O cleanse Thou me from my secret faults.” We need Divine help for resisting temptations—“When Christ was baptized and prayed, the heavens were opened, showing that after Baptism prayer is necessary to man in two ways, to overcome the inward proneness to evil, and the outward enticements of the world and the devil.” Temptations to be resisted with sanctifying effect must be resisted in the power of prayer; slight temptations may perhaps be vanquished by natural effort, or overthrown by an opposite vice, but such victories are not registered in heaven. Again, in order to advance in the spiritual life, in the development of virtues, prayer is a necessity—the apostles prayed, “Lord, increase our faith.” The increase of the interior life simply consists in the growth of different virtues and graces, and these virtues are formed by the combined action of grace and free-will; these are the two factors, the raw material so to speak, from which the fabric is manufactured. A continual supply of grace is needed for the increase of each virtue, and therefore prayer is needed, not only in general, but also with definite reference to the support of the virtue which we have to exercise, or in which we are most conscious of defect. He says “prayer and grace are of the same necessity; grace is necessary for salvation, hence it ought to follow that prayer also is necessary; but why should prayer be ordained in relation to eternity, unless it be for the sake of obtaining grace?” There are, however, two limits to the power of prayer which we must not forget in its relation to grace. Prayer is itself dependent on grace in the spiritual life, and an act of prayer for grace is a correspondence with a grace which has been already given. “The Spirit,” St. Paul says, “also helpeth our infirmities:

for we know not what we should pray for as we ought." "Grace," St. Chrysostom asserts, "precedes our prayers always." The good thought or desire is a touch from another world; the angels of God descended as well as ascended on "Bethel's Stair." The beginnings of life, whether natural or supernatural, are from God; but the continuation and increase of life depend also on human co-operation. Again, prayer as a means of grace must not take the place of Sacraments. The revelation which proclaims the necessity of the one, also asserts the obligation of the other. Prayer is the respiration of the soul; Sacraments, its medicine and food; both alike necessary, though the one constantly, the other occasionally.

III. The obligation to pray is NOT, however, TO BE VIEWED SIMPLY IN REFERENCE TO OUR OWN BENEFIT. Prayer is also an act of religion, an act of obedience to a Divine precept which we should be bound to perform, even if no grace came to us from its performance. This objective view of the necessity of prayer is one less familiar, but hardly less important. Now from this doctrine flow two results. The omission and neglect of prayer involve not only a loss of grace, but constitute a distinct sin; it is a sin against religion, and against charity. Religion is a moral virtue, whose province it is to show due honour and reverence to Almighty God; to cease to pray therefore, is to fail to exercise a moral virtue, and that the highest. What justice is towards the creature, religion is towards God—that by which we seek to give Him His due. To neglect prayer, is also to sin against charity. Charity presents three objects—God, ourselves, others—all of whom are to be loved; but when prayer is omitted we fail in the exercise of the love of God, for we desire to hold converse with those whom we love; the love of our neighbour we fail in also, for he needs our prayers; and the love of our soul we fail in, by the neglect of a duty upon which our spiritual life depends. It remains for us to notice when this precept of prayer is binding, so that the omission of it becomes a sin. When Christ says, "men ought always to pray," it is evident that He does not mean that no other duty should be fulfilled; but that at all times, whatever we are doing, the spirit of prayer should be preserved. IV. We have now to view the NECESSITY OF PRAYER AS A TRANSFORMING INFLUENCE. Those who do not admit that prayer has power with God, yet acknowledge that it has power with us, and allow that it possesses a reflex influence on those who use it. The soul by communing with God becomes like God, receives from His perfections supplies of light, of power, and love according to its needs. The subjective effects of prayer are as manifold as the Divine perfections. It is said that constant intercourse between creatures causes them to resemble one another, not only in disposition and habits, but even in features. Old painters always made St. John like unto his Master in face. They instinctively imagined, that closeness of communion between the beloved disciple and his Lord had occasioned a likeness in features and expression. The first basis of its obligation will remind us that we must not regard our nature as entirely corrupt, and its voice as always misleading, but that in it, fallen as it is, there are vestiges of its original greatness, and intuitions and instincts which are to us an inward revelation of the mind and will of God. The second reason for the necessity of prayer, will explain perhaps the cause of weakness in the hour of temptation—our lack of grace. Further, we must be careful to regard prayer not only as a means of grace but as a duty, and thus fulfil it without reference to our own delight or profit in the act. If, again, we complain of our earthliness and worldliness, and the difficulty which we have in fetching our motives of action from a higher sphere, may it not be that we have failed to realize the importance of prayer in its subjective effect upon character, and have thought to gain a ray of heavenly brightness without the habitual communing with God upon the Mount? (*W. H. Hutchings, M.A.*)

Necessity of prayer:—Prayer is natural to men. The knowledge of our own weakness is soon forced upon us, but with this conviction there comes another, the sense of dependence on One—great, loving, and wise. Out of these springs the necessity of prayer, which is the language of the frail to the mighty—the confession of need, and the instinct of trust. Every known religion attests this irresistible impulse to pray. Men, indeed, will be found to deny, or to undervalue the evidence of this instinct of prayer; but there are times which wring prayer from prayerless lips; times of danger, when all classes find prayer the most appropriate and natural utterance of their lips; times of heart-fear, when the whole spirit sends up from the depths of confusion and darkness an exceeding bitter cry, wherein terror and doubt mingle with the unquenchable instinct of prayer; times when, perhaps, death is approaching, and the dark, unexplored confines of the other world begin to loom vast and vague upon an awakening conscience, and the firm citadel of

stoutly maintained unbelief is swept away, and prayer rushes forth in such a despairing shriek as burst from the lips of Thistlewood—"O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul!" It is not the approach of danger or the feeling of fear only which calls forth prayer. The irresistible disposition is experienced under the influence of feelings widely different from fear. The contemplation of the universe, and the incomprehensible Being who embraces all things, so wrought upon the mind of Rousseau that, in the restlessness of his transports, he would exclaim, "O great Being! O great Being!" The majesty and splendour of nature, brightening and kindling under the beams of the sun, rising upon the rocky heights of Jura, and circling the sky with flame, filled the soul of Voltaire with such awe that he uncovered his head, and, kneeling, he cried, "I believe—I believe in Thee! O mighty God, I believe!" If the language of prayer is thus natural to all men, and forced at times from reluctant lips, it is natural, with an inexpressible sweetness, to hearts accustomed to communion with God. The cultivated instinct becomes a rich enjoyment, and an unutterable relief. The high duty becomes the highest privilege. (*Bishop Boyd Carpenter.*)

Times unfavourable to prayer:—There are times when prayer is natural to the most careless; but there are also times when all things tend to deaden the spirit of prayer in the most thoughtful and prayerful of God's children. Such times are times of great and extensive activity, when pleasure is busy, and even enjoyments are full of toil. In the ceaseless industry of business and gaiety, amusement becomes hard work. Hard work brings weariness, and weariness is followed by an indisposition for any exertion of the spirit. Such, too, are times of a widespread feeling of uneasiness, when a vague apprehension seems to have seized hold upon the minds of all classes, and a strange sense of insecurity begets an unreasoning and universally felt fear. Such are times of noisy religionism and demonstrative piety, when the minds of men are galvanized into an unnatural activity through the spirit of an unwholesome rivalry; when convictions are degraded into opinions, and toil dwindles into talk, and organized Christian effort is strangled in discussion; when an impracticable tenacity of trifles and a stupendous disregard of principles throws the appearance of vitality over a degenerate and dead pietism. In such times the lulling influences of a strained activity, an undefined terror; and a self-asserting, heart-distracting zealotism steal over the spirits of the most watchful of Christ's servants, and often diminish insensibly their vigilance and earnestness in prayer. A convergence of such times into one period Christ described, and on the description He founded His warning that "men ought *always* to pray." (*Ibid.*)

Patient prayer:—One day, returning home from a morning meeting of the Holiness Convention, I came across a little boy standing at a house door, and crying bitterly. I tried to comfort him, but he only cried the more. Just then his mother came out, and when I inquired what was wrong with him, I found he was crying because his mother would not give him his breakfast before the right time. Similarly, we, as God's children, often make bitter repinings, and have hard thoughts about the Lord, because He does not answer our prayers at the time, and in the way that we expect. His ways are not as our ways, nor is His time always our time; but that in some way or other, and in the right way, and at His own time—not a moment too soon, not a moment too late—He will perform that which is good for us and to His glory. (*J. G. Forbes.*)

Constant exercise in prayer:—When a pump is frequently used, but little pains are necessary to obtain water; the water pours out at the first stroke, because it is high; but if the pump has not been used for a long time the water gets low, and when you want it you must pump a long while, and the water comes only after great efforts. It is so with prayer. If we are instant in prayer, every little circumstance awakens the disposition to pray, and desire and words are always ready. But if we neglect prayer it is difficult for us to pray. *Shall we pray, or shall we not?*—A distinguished man of science, an Englishman, was reported in the newspapers the other day to have said to an assembly in the American capital, "I am not a praying man." He was not bemoaning himself, or making confession of sin, or even uttering regret. If he did not speak boastfully, he certainly spoke without any sense of shame, and apparently with some degree of superiority over the commonplace and lag-behind people who still think it right to pray. Another distinguished man, an Englishman likewise, not a man of science, but a man of profound thought, was asked on his deathbed how he felt, and his reply was, "I can pray, and that's a great thing." In his judgment prayer was the highest service to which a whole man can give himself: not something to be left to the ignorant and feeble, but to be risen to,

and aspired after by the greatest intellect and the most illumined mind. Which of the two was right? Which of them possessed the truest conception of the whole duty and privilege of man? I. Let us see WHAT MAY, JUSTIFIABLY OR UNJUSTIFIABLY, INDUCE A MAN TO TAKE THE POSITION INVOLVED IN THE AVOWAL, "I am not a praying man." 1. He may take this position who is conscious of no want which scientific study and material good cannot satisfy. But what shall we say of such a man as this? Is he a true type of our common humanity, or of our most educated humanity? Or, rather, is he not less than a man—only part of a man? The intellect is not the soul, and intellectual pleasure cannot satisfy the soul, or, if there be some souls which profess to be satisfied with it, it only proves how untrue souls may be to their own highest capacities. 2. He may take this position who is separated from mankind by the non-possession of anything of the nature of a religious faculty. An old Greek said, "You may find peoples without cities, without arts, without theatres; but you can find no people without an altar and a God." An Englishman, not a believer in Christianity, said that "upon accurate search, religion and faith appear the only ultimate differences of man"—those which distinguish him from a brute. 3. He who has ascertained that God cannot, consistently with His own laws, or will not, for some other reason, hear prayer, may take the position implied in the saying, "I am not a praying man." But where is such a man to be found? To know that God cannot answer prayer consistently with His own laws, implies a knowledge which is properly Divine. 4. He who would justify his position must be conscious that he has no sins to be forgiven. And if any one should aver that his conscience acquits him, we should say (1 John i. 8, 10). 5. The man who would justify himself in saying, "I am not a praying man," must have already attained all moral excellence, or be conscious of power to attain it by his unaided efforts. In this matter we discern the blindness that has fallen on men. They can see very clearly the power that is needed to produce physical results, but not that which is needed to produce moral. And in this they only prove how much sense has acquired dominion over them. II. THE REASONS FOR NOT PRAYING WHICH MEN, IF HONEST ABOUT THEMSELVES, WOULD AVOW. 1. Prayer is distasteful to them. They have no heart for it. This is a sure sign of being spiritually out of health. Seek the aid of the Healer of souls. 2. They feel that prayer is inconsistent with their habits of life. Then change those habits. "Wash you, make you clean." (J. Kennedy, D.D.) *Hindrances to prayer*:—1. There is the objection that, God having infinite wisdom to determine what is best, and almighty power to accomplish His decree, there is nothing for His creatures to do but submit with reverence and trust. If prayer cannot change His mind, it is useless, and, moreover, an impertinence; if it could, it would be a loss, since it would involve a sacrifice of greater wisdom to less—a result which can only be conceived of as a punishment. The answer to this is, that God in giving human beings a real freedom, a power to choose whether certain events shall be one way or the other, has really, so far as we can see, for wise purposes, limited His own. In short, there is a margin of greater or less good, of manageable error, of permissible evil, which God can set apart for our freedom to exercise itself in, without the world escaping His control. The premise, therefore, from which this objection starts, that "whatever is, is best," is not true in the large sense of those words. Whatever is is best under all the circumstances, under the circumstances of our crime, negligence, or error, but not the best that might have been had we reached forth our hand to take what lay within our power. It may be better if we do not pray, that we should miss some blessings God has in reserve for those who seek Him in love and trust, but this is not the best that might have been. It is the will of God in relation to our negligence; but our trust and importunity would have called into action a higher and more generous law of His loving nature. 2. The next objection is that of the imagination filled and overpowered by the thought of the vastness of the material universe. "Do you suppose," men ask, "that a petty, individual life, a worm crawling on the surface of one of His smallest planets, can be an object of particular consideration and interest to the Almighty Creator?" Why not? Is the Almighty Ruler compelled to distinguish between imperial and provincial cares like an earthly monarch? Because He is *here* with some suffering infant, taking its inarticulate moan into His mighty and pitiful heart, is He less in the planet Neptune, or is His power withdrawn from the glowing masses of future worlds? There is no egotism in thinking that man—any man—is more important in the Divine regard than a mass of matter, however long it has lain under the Creator's eye, and however much it may impose upon our imagination.

3. Practical hindrances to prayer are found where the speculative barriers we have been considering do not exist. Mental indolence is one of the greatest of these hindrances, and mental indolence is a much more prevalent and serious fault than bodily indolence. No one can really pray without using his understanding, engaging his affections, and making an effort of will. Prayer is work, and hard work. We must go to the Saviour, and ask His aid. "Lord, teach us to pray." (*E. W. Shalders, B.A.*) *Belief in prayer the outcome of need realized*:—As to the so-called scientific challenge to prove the efficacy of prayer by the result of simultaneous petition. A God that should fail to hear, receive, attend to one single prayer, the feeblest or worst, I cannot believe in; but a God that would grant every request of every man or every company of men, would be an evil God—that is no God, but a demon. That God should hang in the thought-atmosphere, like a windmill, waiting till men enough should combine and send out prayer in sufficient force to turn His outspread arms, is an idea too absurd. God waits to be gracious, not to be tempted. "But if God is so good as you represent Him, and if He knows all that we need, and better far than we do ourselves, why should it be necessary to ask Him for anything?" I answer, What if He knows prayer to be the thing we need first and most? What if the main object in God's idea of prayer be the supplying of our great, our endless need—the need of Himself? What if the good of all our smaller and lower needs lies in this, that they help to drive us to God? Hunger may drive the runaway child home, and he may or may not be fed at once, but he needs his mother more than his dinner. Communion with God is the one need of the soul beyond all other need; prayer is the beginning of that communion, and some need is the motive of that prayer. Our wants are for the sake of our coming into communion with God, our eternal need. In regard, however, to the high necessities of our nature, it is in order that He may be able to give that God requires us to ask—requires by driving us to it—by shutting us up to prayer. For how can He give into the soul of a man what it needs, while that soul cannot receive it? The ripeness for receiving is the asking. The blossom-cup of the soul, to be filled with the heavenly dews, is its prayer. When the soul is hungry for the light, for the truth—when its hunger has waked its higher energies, thoroughly roused the will, and brought the soul into its highest condition, that of action, its only fitness for receiving the things of God, that action is prayer. Then God can give; then He can be as He would towards the man; for the glory of God is to give Himself. We thank thee, Lord Christ, for by Thy pain alone do we rise towards the knowledge of this glory of Thy Father and our Father. (*G. Macdonald, LL.D.*) *The adaptability of nature to prayer*:—A waterfall is a scientific object only in a very rude way. But when every drop of its waters has been manipulated and controlled by the human will till the mills of a Lowell or a Lawrence display from every spindle and shuttle the presence of human intelligence and power, then the untamed river begins to sparkle with the brilliancy of science, and to murmur its praises from every ripple. That is, the more mind-power is mingled with matter-power, the more scientific is the compound result. The uniformity of the waterfall is far less scientific than the diversity of the waterwheel. Automatic mechanisms, machines that adjust themselves to change, throwing themselves out of gear at the least obstacle or breakage, ringing a bell as a signal of distress, increasing or diminishing combustion, changing position, as in the case of a lathe to meet all the convolutions of a gun-stock, have a far higher scientific character than a carpenter's drawing-knife, or a housewife's spinning-wheel, which display less of diversity and more of uniformity. It was once supposed that the solar system is so balanced that the loss of a grain of weight, or the slightest change of motion, would dislocate and destroy the whole system. It was a higher science, not a lower, that has since taught us that exact uniformity is by no means necessary to the stability of the system, but that oscillation and change are fully provided for in the original plan. The principle holds good that the modifications of a mind-power introduced into a material mechanism advance its scientific rank, and increase rather than diminish the proof of the presence of law and order in its working. I was riding, a few years since, about one of the rural cities of the State of New York with one of the most distinguished preachers at the metropolis. We were speaking of the curious fallacies involved in Tyndall's famous prayer-gauge conundrum. Just then we drove up to the city water-works. I told him that if he would go in with me I thought we could find a good illustration of the manner in which God may answer prayer without interfering with any of the laws of nature. The point, let us remember, is, that the power of an intelligent will can be so introduced among the forces of matter as to have perfect uniformity in the working

of those forces, while diversity appears in their results. The building we entered was furnished with a Holley engine. As we stood by the steam gauge we observed constant and considerable changes in the amount of steam produced. As there was no cause apparent in or about the engine itself, we asked for an explanation. "That," said the engineer, "is done by the people in the city. As they open their faucets to draw the water the draft upon our fires is increased. As they close them, it is diminished. The smallest child can change the movements of our engine according to his will. It was the design of the maker to adjust his engine so that it should respond perfectly to the needs of the people, be they great or small." Just then the bell rung, the furnace-drafts flew open, the steam rose rapidly in the gauge, the engineer flew to his post, the ponderous machinery accelerated its movement. We heard a general alarm of fire. "How is that?" we asked. "That," he said, "was the opening of some great fire-plug." "And how about the bell? What did that ring for?" "That," he said, "was to put us on the alert. You saw that the firemen began to throw on coal at once. A thousand things have to be looked after when there is a great fire. It won't do to leave the engine to itself at such times." In a moment there came a lull. The great pumps moved more deliberately. In another minute a roar of steam told us the safety-valve had opened, and soon the great engine had returned to its ordinary, sleepy motion. "Wonderful," said my friend; "the whole thing seems alive. I almost thought it would start and run to the fire itself." "I think this one of the grandest triumphs of science," said the engineer, as he bade me good-bye. The illustration is a good one, but others of the same sort are at our hand on every side. The uniformity of nature is, in fact, one of its lesser attributes. Its great glory is in its wonderful adaptability. Its greatest glory is its unlimited capacity to receive mind-forces, and to mingle them with its matter-forces in perfect harmony, and in infinite variety of combination. If human science has been able to do so much to overcome the eventless uniformity of nature in its wildness and crudeness, shall we deny to the Divine omniscience the power to effect the slightest modifications necessary in answering the prayers of His children? Nay, shall we deny to Him the power so to adjust the original mechanism of the universe that prayer with its appropriate action may directly modify that mechanism, as the child's thirst and his little hand can open a faucet and change the action of the great water-works miles away. Or, is it at all unscientific to believe that other intelligent agents may, in answer to prayer, be "caused to fly swiftly," as the little bell aroused the engineer. Or can science offer any valid objection if we say that God Himself holds the forces of nature in His own hand, waiting, for high moral reasons, "to be inquired of by the house of Israel to do these things for them"? (*Prof. J. P. Gulliver.*) *Prayer answered after death:—* Let me tell you that if any of you should die with your prayers unanswered, you need not conclude that God has disappointed you. I have heard that a certain godly father had the unhappiness to be the parent of some five or six most graceless sons. All of them as they grew up imbibed infidel sentiments, and led a libidinous life. The father who had been constantly praying for them, and was a pattern of every virtue, hoped at least that in his death he might be able to say a word that should move their hearts. He gathered them to his bedside, but his unhappiness in dying was extreme, for he lost the light of God's countenance, and was beset with doubts and fears, and the last black thought that haunted him was, "Instead of my death being a testimony for God, which will win my dear sons, I die in such darkness and gloom that I fear I shall confirm them in their infidelity, and lead them to think that there is nothing in Christianity at all." The effect was the reverse. The sons came round the grave at the funeral, and when they returned to the house, the eldest son thus addressed his brothers:—"My brothers, throughout his lifetime, our father often spoke to us about religion, and we have always despised it, but what a sermon his deathbed has been to us! for if he who served God so well and lived so near to God found it so hard a thing to die, what kind of death may we expect ours to be who have lived without God and without hope?" The same feeling possessed them all, and thus the father's death had strangely answered the prayers of his life through the grace of God. You cannot tell but what, when you are in glory, you should look down from the windows of heaven and receive a double heaven in beholding your dear sons and daughters converted by the words you left behind. I do not say this to make you cease pleading for their immediate conversion, but to encourage you. Never give up prayer, never be tempted to cease from it. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Prayer is manly:—"Men ought to pray."* Let none misunderstand us when we lay stress on the word "men." Of

course, Christ does not mean one sex merely; He immediately afterwards speaks of "a certain widow." His reference is to the human race at large. We are assured by Paul that in Him there is "neither male nor female." Nevertheless, we eagerly take advantage of the word thus used by our Saviour that we may affirm and maintain the manliness of prayer. The assertion is far from unnecessary, and every one who is acquainted with public opinion will, we think, agree with us. Is there not a notion abroad that prayer is a somewhat feeble, sentimental, effeminate pursuit? Are we not often reminded by travellers on the continent of the fact that churches and cathedrals are chiefly filled by women? Sandy Mackaye, in "Alton Locke," describes a certain congregation as made up of "babies and bonnets," and we know what the inference is. Dr. J. Martineau felicitously speaks of those who regard it "a fond superstition and womanly weakness to ask God anything." Don't we all recollect the account given of Tom Brown when, on arriving at school, he was pelted, chaffed, and ridiculed, because he kneeled beside his bed? Perhaps the last-named incident is more significant than any or the whole of the preceding ones, since there is nothing about which boys are so ambitious as to seem manly. The occurrence is, therefore, a feather which, as it flies, shows the way of the wind. The idea that prayer is unworthy of us as men is utterly unreasonable and untrue. Is it not manly to do right? No one disputes it. We get our word virtue from the Latin *vir*, a man; to be moral is to be manly. By parity of argument, to do right generally must be manly; prayer is right, God would not will it were it not; therefore it is manly. (*T. R. Stevenson.*)

Universal prayer:—Remember, you can pray for any need—for lengthened life, as Hezekiah did; for help, as Daniel did; for light, as Bartimeus did; for mercy, as David did; for rain, as Elijah did; for a son, as Hannah did; for grace, as Paul did. You can pray, too, anywhere; in the deep, like Jonah; on the sea or the house-top, like Peter; on your bed, like Hezekiah; in the mountain, like Jesus; in the wilderness, like Hagar; in the street, like Jairus; in a cave, like David; on the cross, like the dying thief. You can pray, too, anyhow; short, like Peter and the publican; long, like Moses at the consecration of the Tabernacle, or Solomon at the dedication of the Temple. You can pray in silence, as Hannah did in the Temple; in your secret thoughts, as Nehemiah did before Darius; or aloud, like the Syro-Phenician woman; in tears, like Magdalen; in groans, or songs, as David did. You can pray any time. In the morning, like David; at noon, like Daniel; at midnight, like Silas; in childhood, like Samuel; in youth, like Timothy; in manhood, like the centurion; in age, like Simeon; in sickness, like Job; or in death, like Jacob and the dying Christ. And all of them were heard by the Hearer of prayer. I pray you, learn to pray! Link yourselves to the throne of God. Prayer will stand you in good stead every day of your mortal life! will make you joyful in the hour of death; and by the power of prayer you shall scale the mount of God! Pray! (*J. J. Wray.*)

Perseverance in prayer: or, *strike again*:—"God's seasons are not at your beck. If the first stroke of the flint doth not bring forth the fire, you must strike again." That is to say, God will hear prayer, but He may not answer it at the time which we in our own minds have appointed; He will reveal Himself to our seeking hearts, but not just when and where we have settled in our own expectations. Hence the need of perseverance and importunity in supplication. In the days of flint and steel and brimstone matches we had to strike and strike again, dozens of times, before we could get a spark to live in the tinder; and we were thankful enough if we succeeded at last. Shall we not be as persevering and hopeful as to heavenly things? We have more certainty of success in this business than we had with our flint and steel, for we have God's promise at our back. Never let us despair. God's time for mercy will come; yea, it has come, if our time for believing has arrived. Ask in faith, nothing wavering; but never cease from petitioning because the king delays to reply. Strike the steel again. Make the sparks fly and have your tinder ready: you will get a light before long.

Answers to prayer:—In reply to the question, "What place has prayer for temporal blessings in your system of natural law in the spiritual world?" Professor Drummond, as reported, said, in one of his talks at Lakeview:—A large, splendidly equipped steamship sailed out from Liverpool for New York. Among the passengers were a little boy and girl, who were playing about the deck, when the boy lost his ball overboard. He immediately ran to the captain and shouted, "Stop the ship; my ball is overboard!" The captain smiled pleasantly, but said, "Oh no, my boy; I cannot stop the ship, with all these people, just to get a rubber ball." The boy went away grumbling, and confided to the little girl that it was his opinion

the captain didn't stop the ship because he couldn't. He believed the ship was wound up some way in Liverpool, and she just had to run, day and night, until she ran down. A day or so afterward the children were playing on deck again, when the little girl dropped her doll down into the engine-room, and she supposed it, too, had gone overboard. She said, "I'll run and ask the captain to stop the ship and get my dolly." "It's no use," said the boy; "he cannot do anything. I've tried him." But the little girl ran on to the captain with her story and appeal. The captain came and peeked down into the engine-room, and, seeing the doll, said, "Just wait here a minute." And, while the ship went right on, he ran down the stairway and brought up the little girl's doll, to her delight, and to the boy's amazement. The next day the cry rang out, "Man overboard!" and immediately the bell rang in the engine-room, by orders from the lever in the hands of the captain; the great ship stood still until boats were lowered and the life rescued. Then she steamed on until she reached her wharf in New York. As soon as the ship was tied up the captain went up town and bought the boy a better ball than the one he had lost. "Now," said the professor, "each of the three prayers was answered. The little girl received her request without stopping the ship; the little boy by a little waiting received his also; and yet for sufficient reason the ship was stopped by a part of the machinery itself, not an afterthought, but something put into the ship when it was made."

Hours spent in prayer:—One is bowed down with shame to read of the long hours spent day by day in prayer by many holy men whose lives are given to us. Nor is it less humiliating to know of the extraordinary delight experienced by some good men in these long hours of prayer. It is related of St. Francis de Sales that in a day's retreat, in which he continued most of the day in prayer, he was so overwhelmed with the joy of this communion with God that he exclaimed, "Withdraw Thyself, O Lord, for I am not able to bear the greatness of Thy sweetness!" and the saintly Fletcher, of Madeley, on one occasion prayed for less delight in prayer, fearing it would become more of an indulgence than of a duty.

There was in a city a judge which feared not God, neither regarded man.—*The unjust judge and the importunate widow*:—1. There are points of resemblance between God's people and this widow. In Satan, have not we also an adversary to be avenged on? Are not we also poor and needy? She had known happy days; and so also had man. By death she had lost her husband; and by sin we have lost our God. Poor and friendless, she had no means of avenging, of righting herself; no more have we—we were without help when Christ died for the ungodly. "The sons of Zeruiah," cried David, "are too many for me"; and so are sin and its corruptions, the world and its temptations, the devil and his wiles, for us. 2. There are likewise some points of resemblance between God and this unjust judge. Long had he stood by and, without one effort on her behalf, seen this poor woman spurned and oppressed; and long also God seemed to stand by when His people were ground to the dust in Egypt; in old Pagan and in more modern Popish times, when their cruel enemies shed the blood of His saints like water, and, immured in dungeons, bleeding on scaffolds, hiding in the caves of our mountains, His elect cried to Him day and night, and the Church, helpless as a widow, implored Him, saying, "Avenge me of mine adversary!" And this is true also of His dealings with individual believers. How long in their corruption are the messengers of Satan left to buffet them? Weary of the struggle with some besetting sin, and hating it as a slave his cruel tyrant, they cry, "How long, O Lord, how long?" how often, all but despairing, are they ready to exclaim with Paul, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" 3. But there are important points of disparity between this judge and our God: and in these I find assurance of final victory, and the highest encouragements to instant, constant, urgent prayer. A bad man, with a heart cold as ice and hard as iron, was he moved by importunity to redress the wrongs of one for whom he felt no regard, whose happiness or misery was nothing to him?—how much more will God be importuned to grant our prayers! Just, and more than just, He is merciful and gracious, long-suffering and slow to wrath, abundant in goodness and in truth. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *The importunate widow*:—1. First, then, consider our LORD'S DESIGN IN THIS PARABLE—"Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." 1. Our Lord meant by saying men ought always to pray, that they ought to be always in the spirit of prayer, always ready to pray. Like the old knights, always in warfare, not always on their steeds dashing forward with their lances in rest to unhorse an adversary, but always wearing their weapons where they could readily reach them, and always ready to encounter wounds or death for the sake of the cause which they championed. Those grim

warriors often slept in their armour; so even when we sleep, we are still to be in the spirit of prayer, so that if perchance we wake in the night we may still be with God. 2. Our Lord may also have meant, that the whole life of the Christian should be a life of devotion to God. Men ought always to pray. It means that when they are using the lapstone, or the chisel, when the hands are on the plough-handles, or on the spade, when they are measuring out the goods, when they are dealing in stocks, whatever they are doing, they are to turn all these things into a part of the sacred pursuit of God's glory. Their common garments are to be vestments, their meals are to be sacraments, their ordinary actions are to be sacrifices, and they themselves a royal priesthood, a peculiar people zealous for good works. 3. A third meaning which I think our Lord intended to convey to us was this: men ought always to pray, that is, they should persevere in prayer. 4. I cannot leave this part of the subject without observing that our Lord would have us learn that men should be more frequent in prayer. Prayerfulness will scarcely be kept up long unless you set apart times and seasons for prayer. 5. Our Lord means, to sum up the whole, that believers should exercise a universality of supplication—we ought to pray at all times. II. In enforcing this precept, our Lord gives us a parable in which there are two actors, the characteristics of the two actors being such as to add strength to His precept. In the first verse of the parable there is a judge. Now, herein is the great advantage to us in prayer. Brethren, if this poor woman prevailed with a judge whose office is stern, unbending, untender, how much more ought you and I to be instant in prayer and hopeful of success when we have to supplicate a Father! We must, however, pass on now to notice the other actor in the scene—the widow; and here everything tells again the same way, to induce the Church of God to be importunate. She was apparently a perfect stranger to the judge. She appeared before him as an individual in whom he took no interest. He had possibly never seen her before; who she was and what she wanted was no concern to him. But when the Church appears before God she comes as Christ's own bride, she appears before the Father as one whom He has loved with an everlasting love. And shall He not avenge His own elect, His own chosen, His own people? Shall not their prayers prevail with Him, when a stranger's importunity won a suit of an unwilling judge? III. The third and last point: THE POWER WHICH, ACCORDING TO THIS PARABLE, TRIUMPHED. 1. This power was not the woman's eloquence, "I pray thee avenge me of mine adversary." These words are very few. Just eight words. Verbiage is generally nothing better in prayer than a miserable fig-leaf with which to cover the nakedness of an unawakened soul. 2. Another thing is quite certain, namely, that the woman did not prevail through the merits of her case. He does not say, "She has a good case, and I ought to listen to it." No, he was too bad a man to be moved by such a motive—but "she worries me," that is all, "I will attend to it." So in our suit—in the suit of a sinner with God, it is not the merit of his case that can ever prevail with God. If thou art to win, another's merit must stand instead of thine, and on thy part it must not be merit but misery; it must not be thy righteousness but thy importunity that is to prevail with God. However unworthy you may be, continue in prayer. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Parable of the importunate widow*:—I. Consider THE PARABLE ITSELF. II. Inquire, WHAT IS MEANT BY IMPORTUNITY IN PRAYER. 1. Attention. 2. Ardour. 3. Frequency. 4. Regularity. III. Let us next consider WHY IMPORTUNITY IS SAID TO PREVAIL WITH GOD. 1. Because it consists in the exercise of pious and amiable feelings. 2. Because the frequent exercise of such feelings has a tendency to form pious and virtuous habits; and such habits are qualifications for higher society and purer happiness than this world affords. 3. Because the frequent excitement of such feelings fits us for receiving the blessings we ask. IV. We may shortly observe, from what our Saviour has said in the seventh and eighth verses, that HE SEEMS TO INSINUATE THAT SOMETHING LIKE A STATE OF PERSECUTION WILL TAKE PLACE ABOUT THE TIME OF HIS SECOND COMING. For why should the elect be represented as crying to God day and night, unless they were in a suffering state? 1. We may conclude that many will despond and cease to believe that God will interfere in their favour. 2. It also necessarily follows that, after the second coming of Jesus, God will avenge His elect, and that suddenly and completely. (J. Thomson, D.D.) *Pray without ceasing*:—How can the conduct of this selfish tyrant to a helpless sufferer be any illustration of a just and merciful God's dealing with "His own elect?" One thing, at least, is certain, that in this, and, by parity of reasoning, in all like cases, it does not follow, because two things are compared in one point, that they must be alike in every other. The only points of contact are the mutual

relation of the parties as petitioner and sovereign, the withholding of the thing requested and its subsequent bestowal. In all the rest there is, there can be no resemblance; there is perfect contrariety. Why, then, was this unsuitable image chosen even for the sake of illustration? Why was not the Hearer of Prayer represented by a creature bearing more of His own image? Because this would not have answered our Lord's purpose, but would only have taught feebly by comparison what is now taught mightily by contrast. The ground of confidence here furnished is not the similitude of God to man, but their infinite disparity. If even such a character, governed by such motives, may be rationally expected to take a certain course, however alien from his native disposition and his habits, there can be no risk in counting on a like result where all these adverse circumstances favour it. The three main points of the antithesis are these—the character, the practice, and the motive of the judge—his moral character, his official practice, and his motive for acting upon this occasion in a manner contrary to both. His official practice is intimated by the word “unjust” applied to him near the conclusion of the parable. The interior source of this exterior conduct is then described in other terms. He feared not God. He neither revered Him as a sovereign, nor dreaded Him as an avenger. Among the motives which may act upon this principle, not the least potent is the fear of man. This may include the dread of his displeasure, the desire of his applause, and an instinctive shrinking even from his scorn. Shame, fear, ambition, all may contribute to produce an outward goodness having no real counterpart within. This is particularly true of public and official acts. They can consent to risk their souls, but not to jeopard their respectability. There would thus seem to be three grounds for expecting justice and fidelity in human society, and especially in public trusts. The first and highest is the fear of God, including all religious motives—then the fear of man or a regard to public sentiment—and last, the force of habit, the authority of precedent, a disposition to do that which has been done before, because it has been done before. These three impulsive forces do not utterly exclude each other. They may co-exist in due subordination. The same is true of a regard to settled usage, or even to personal habit, when correctly formed. Indeed, these latter motives never have so powerful an influence for good, as when they act in due subordination to the fear of God. It is only when this is wanting, and they undertake to fill its place, that they become unlawful or objectionable. And even then, although they cannot make good the deficiency in God's sight, they may make it good in man's. Although the root of the matter is not in them, a short-lived verdure may be brought out and maintained by artificial means. The want of any one of these impulsive forces may detract from the completeness of the ultimate effect. How much more the absence of them all! In other words, how utterly unjust must that judge be who neither fears God nor regards man. If this widow has not the means of appealing to his avarice, how clear it seems that his refusal to avenge her is a final one, and that continued importunity can only waste time and provoke him to new insult. I dwell on these particulars to show that, in their aggregate, they are intended to convey the idea of a hopeless case. She hopes against hope. An indomitable instinct triumphs over reason. She persists in her entreaties. The conclusion which we have already reached is, that the widow in the parable did right, acted a reasonable part, in hoping against hope, and still persisting in her suit when everything combined to prove it hopeless. She would have had no right to sacrifice the comfort and tranquillity, much less the life or the salvation of her children to her own despondency or weariness of effort. But let us suppose that he had been an upright, conscientious, faithful judge, whose execution of his office was delayed by some mistake or want of information. How much less excusable would she have then been in relinquishing her rights or those of others in despair! Suppose that, instead of knowing that the judge was in principle and habit unjust, she had known him, by experience, to be just and merciful, as well as eminently wise. Suppose that she had been protected by him, and her wrongs redressed in many other cases. How easy must it then have been to trust! How doubly mad and wicked to despair! There seems to be room for only one more supposition. Exclude all chance of intellectual or moral wrong. Enlarge the attributes before supposed, until they reach infinity or absolute perfection. What, then, would be left as the foundation or the pretext of a doubt? The bare fact of delay? If she was wise in hoping against hope, what must we be in despairing against evidence? If she was right in trusting to the selfish love of ease in such a man, how wrong must we be in distrusting the benevolence, the faithfulness, the truth of such a

God! Every point of dissimilitude between the cases does but serve to make our own still worse and less excusable, by bringing into shocking contrast men's dependence on the worst of their own species, with their want of confidence in God. (*J. A. Alexander.*) *Times adverse to prayer*.—There is a rude sense of right in most men's breasts; and the appeal of outraged helplessness is not often made in vain. But this judge was in his very nature incapable of understanding or feeling the force of such an appeal: he was an unjust judge. Again, even in cases where man have no natural and conscientious sympathy with righteousness, the instinct of retribution frequently arouses a fear of God, which impels them to acts of justice; but in the case of the unjust judge there seemed no avenue for the approach of such a feeling: he feared not God. Nor was he moved by that which, as a last motive, is powerful in the most debased natures, the regard for the opinion of other men. He was of that cold, hardened, and unaccommodating character that he neither feared God nor regarded man. What did our Master intend by thus sketching the judge? . . . The unjust judge is not the portrait of what God is, but of what, owing to circumstances of trial, and misrepresentations of unreasonable and wicked men, the suffering, waiting people of Christ will be almost tempted to think Him. All about them they hear a language which haunts them with hideous dread; the voice of the enemy and the blasphemer are heard whispering, "Is there knowledge in the Most High? He will never regard it"; or deepening into the hoarse utterance of half wish, half fear—"There is no God!" Harassed by doubts, wounded and terrified by the oft-reiterated assaults and assertions of her enemies, driven to despair at the seeming unbroken stillness of the unanswering heavens, the Church of Christ is as the lone helpless widow, powerless and poverty-stricken. But she is mighty. Though this hideous portraiture of grim and impassive godhead is thrust upon her, she will have none of it. She will not abandon her plea, or accept the description. With this picture of hard, inexorable justice before her, she will not abandon her plea. If it be so, that she is thus weak and poor, and dealing with one whom no cries for pity, or claims for justice, can arouse, and no aspect of misery touch and soften; then nothing remains for her but the might of her weakness in its unceasing supplications, which will take no denial; nothing remains but to weary Him out into compliance. (*Bishop Boyd Carpenter.*) *Oriental judges*.—"A judge" in an Oriental city must not be regarded precisely as a judge among us, nowadays, nor yet with all the peculiar powers and duties of the ancient judges of Israel, whose powers somewhat resembled that of a king. Those ancient judges, more like ancient kings than anything else, were yet officers or rulers of such a peculiar sort, that the Romans transferred the name of their dignity into Latin—at least of their Carthaginian counterparts. Out of the Shemitic *shofet* they made *suffetes*. But in the time of Christ the judge, where not a Roman official, had still some power equivalent to that of the sheriffs of our country. He was head judge and head executioner of his sentences. Never till our own times, or those of two of three generations ago, has the world worked out the problem of wholly separating the legislative, the judicial, and the executive functions. Nor is it always accomplished by a nominal separation; nor can that separation ever be entirely actual, even as much so as required by theory. As long as the legislative or judicial power has anything to do, it must be gifted with some slight executive powers. But this is only one instance in the physical and metaphysical universe of the failure of human divisions to cover all that the one Spirit has made or is working. The prayer of the widow to the unjust judge—and here "unrighteous" is better; for attention is directed not very closely to his merely judicial function—regards rather his executive function than anything else. She does not call—in words at least—for a hearing of her cause, but for an order of enforcement. In modern times that would be by sending a *sabtiéh* or two, soldier police, to apply the necessary force. This might be done even without hearing, or before hearing, the case. To this day, in the East, it is necessary for poor suitors to be very importunate. It would be easy to give examples; but it might be tedious. A woman will frequently beg and beg a judge to attend to her case, or to execute a decree in a case he has passed upon and rendered judgment, and generally promise or ask to kiss the judge's feet. But a little money from the other side will effectually stop the judge's ears. (*Prof. Isaac H. Hall.*) *A widow.—The Church's widowhood*.—This parable sets before us, under the figure of a widow—a feeble and injured widow—the true character and standing of the Church of God on earth, during the present age. In numbers she is few—a mere election, a gathering out, no more; in power, slender; in honour, little set by; in

alliances, little courted. That such is the case, nay, that such must be the case, appears from such things as these :—1. The Father's purpose concerning her. That purpose has great things in store for her, in the ages to come ; but at present her lot is to be weakness, poverty, hardship, and the endurance of wrong. 2. Her conformity to her Lord. He is her pattern, not merely as to character, but as to the whole course of life. In Him she learns what her lot on earth is to be. He, the rejected one, even among His own, she must be rejected too. 3. Her standing by faith. It is the world's unbelief that so specially makes it the world ; so it is the Church's faith that makes her what she is, the Church. "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." 4. The condition of the world out of which she is called. It is an evil world. 5. Her prospects. She is an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ Jesus. The world loves not the faithful widow, and would fain seduce her to a second marriage—a marriage with itself. Decked in costly array, it would admire her, and give her its willing fellowship. But dressed only in the widow's mournful garb, it cannot tolerate her. Her faithfulness to her Lord condemns it. Her seclusion and separation rebuke it. Her continuing in supplication and prayers night and day it cannot away with. The widow's cry sorely disturbs the world's peace, and, ringing nightly through its glittering halls of pleasure, turns all its music into discord. Nor less does Satan dislike the widow's weeds and the widow's cry. For they remind him that his day is short, and that he who is to bind him in chains, and cast him out of his dominions, will soon be here. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *The importunate widow a type of God's elect people* :—I. GOD HAS AN ELECT PEOPLE IN THE WORLD, scattered up and down among men found in various places, and in almost all communities, as his chosen ones. Men may take this principle in a light which does not belong to it, and affirm that they can deduce conclusions from it which in the Bible are directly and distinctly denied. There are, I might observe, two things which always make it appear to me, not only in a light that is harmless, but in a light that is most beneficial. 1. The one is, that it is never separated from its moral influences. "Predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son." "Chosen that we may be blameless and harmless, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." And here, in the passage before us, it stands allied with a devotional character and with a praying habit of mind : and we are sure of this, that, practically felt in the mind, it does humble, prostrate, purify, inspire, and awaken within the lowest gratitude, and, at the same time, the loftiest and the holiest joy. 2. The other thing that I would wish to remark respecting it is, that it interferes not in any degree with the universal invitations of the gospel. II. THE ELECT OF GOD ARE DISTINGUISHED BY THEIR DEVOTIONAL CHARACTER—THEIR PRAYING FRAME OF MIND. "Shall not God avenge His own elect who cry day and night before Him ?" The evidence that we are chosen of God, called into His Church, made partakers of His mercy, is in this, that we recognize His providence ; that we live in daily dependence upon His bounty ; that we lift up our hearts to Him in supplication ; that believing we pray, and that praying we confide. Then I would add, that an elect and praying people are beautiful in the eyes of God, and His ears are ever open to their cry. III. Their prayers particularly regard THE RETRIBUTION UPON THE ENEMY, AND THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM. "Shall not God avenge His own elect, who cry day and night unto Him ?" There is emphasis on the word "cry." Abel's blood did cry ; there was a shrill, piercing, importunate voice in it. Just before God came down to deliver the Israelites in Egypt, on account of their bondage and oppression, it is said they did "sigh and cry" : and we find the Church, when distressed and in anguish by reason of the enemy, is said to "cry." A widow, a desolate person, sustaining injury, bleeding under injustice, cries, and asks the judge for justice ; and precisely in the same way the Church is said to cry to God for justice. And against whom ? The answer is, against Satan, the great adversary, who has established a tyranny and an usurpation in this world, who has built up his kingdom amidst darkness, and violence, and blood. And we ask for justice upon him, and pray God to bruise him under our feet, and to do it quickly. The Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil ; and we call on the Son of God in the exercise of His supremacy to do His work. IV. THE PRAYER OF THE ELECT CHURCH FOR JUSTICE SHALL BE HEARD AND ANSWERED WHEN THE LORD COMETH. I am not sure that the word "avenge" here is the right one : if the widow had asked vengeance on her enemy, peradventure the judge would not have granted it ; but it means more properly "justice." "Though He bear long with them," says the text. A very learned critic, on the authority of many ancient

manuscripts, observes it ought to be "though He compassionate them": that is, while they cry, though God appeareth not to attend to them, yet He does hear them and tenderly compassionates them. If we take it as being correctly "avenge," I beg to remark that the world and the wicked have had their time of vengeance. Here is a picture! "All that pass by clap their hands at Thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem." With ferocious face they clapped their hands, and hissed, and wagged their heads, "saying, Is this the city that men call the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth? All Thine enemies have opened their mouth against Thee: they hiss and gnash the teeth: they say, We have swallowed her up: certainly this is the day that we looked for; we have found, we have seen it." Unholy vengeance! Revenge, in the true and strict sense of the expression, awful to contemplate! That was *man's* day; that was the day of the adversary: and God stood silent by. But God has *His* day: the day of the Lord cometh: and this is referred to in the text. V. We come to the last thing, when the Lord shall come to execute His justice, FAITH WILL BE AT A LOW EBB ON THE EARTH. "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh shall He find faith on the earth?" when He cometh to execute justice. It is very observable that in almost every great and signal instance in which God has remarkably come for a purpose specified in the passage, it has been suddenly, in a moment, and when there is no belief of it. (*J. Stratten*.) *God hears the prayers of His elect*:—I. GOD HAS AN ELECT PEOPLE IN THE WORLD, WHO ARE A PRAYING PEOPLE. This character of a praying people is confined to them. II. "GOD WILL AVENGE HIS OWN ELECT, WHO CRY DAY AND NIGHT UNTO HIM." Though men see not, He is in the world; though men see Him not, He is not far from any one of us; though men see not His work, He is carrying it on; He has been building up His Church, and establishing its progress. III. THE STRIKING REBUKE WHICH CHRIST UTTERS: "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith upon the earth?" What a thought; how we ought to humble ourselves! (*I. Saunders*.) *God's response to the cry of the elect*:—Alexander Peden, one of the Scotch covenanters, with some others, had been at one time hard pursued by Claverhouse's troops for a considerable way. At last, getting some little height between them and their pursuers, he stood still and said, "Let us pray here, for if the Lord hear not our prayer and save us, we are all dead men." He then prayed, saying, "O Lord, this is the hour and the power of Thine enemies; they may not be idle. But hast Thou no other work for them than to send them after us? Send them after them to whom Thou wilt give strength to flee, for our strength is gone. Twine them about the hill, O Lord, and cast the lap of Thy cloak over the poor old folk and their puir things, and save us this one time, and we will keep it in remembrance, and tell to the commendation of Thy goodness, Thy pity and compassion, what Thou didst for us at sic a time." And in this he was heard, for a cloud of mist immediately intervened between them and their persecutors, and in the meantime orders came to go in quest of James Renwick, and a great company with him. Shall He find faith on the earth?—*The faith of the Church*:—I. THE IMPORTANCE ATTACHED BY CHRIST TO THE FAITH OF HIS PEOPLE. The faith of the Church is important, because it is at the root of all Christian activity and zeal. What wonder is it, then, that Christ attaches such importance to the faith of His people? II. THOUGH THE FAITH OF THE CHURCH IS TRIED BY THE DELAY OF THE DELIVERANCE, YET THERE ARE ABUNDANT REASONS WHY IT SHOULD HOLD ON. There is nothing more remarkable in the history of Christ than the calm faith which He had in His own mission—in its success and ultimate triumph. He stood alone; and to be alone in any enterprise or sorrow is to most men hard and trying. Truth is truth if only embraced by one; truth is not a whit more true when ten thousand believe it. But we like sympathy. No one in the wide world understood His mission; but His faith never wavered for a moment. He was not careful to engrave His words on stone, or write them on parchment; He simply spoke. A spoken word—it stirs the air, it is like a pebble thrown into the ocean of air, causing a few ripples to spread, and it is soon lost like a pebble. Christ flung His words into the air, spoke on the mountain, by the sea-shore, in the Temple, in the synagogue, in the village, by the grave; and He knew that His words were living, and would continue to live, that they were not "like a snow-flake on the river, a moment white, and then gone for ever," but that they were destined to spread and to revolutionize the world. We learn, however, that notwithstanding His unshaken faith, He could see clouds in the future, persecution, corruption, iniquity, abounding, love waxing cold, eras of apparent retrogression and failure. And seeing all this, He asks, "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find this faith on the earth?"

III. He supposes THAT THE CHURCH MAY BECOME WEARY OF THE DELAY. (*James Owen.*) *The search for faith*:—Faithfulness is established in the very heavens : but what of faithfulness upon the earth? I. I notice with regard to our text, first, that it is REMARKABLE IF WE CONSIDER THE PERSON MENTIONED AS SEARCHING FOR FAITH : “When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” 1. When Jesus comes He will look for precious faith: He has more regard for faith than for all else that earth can yield Him. Our returning Lord will care nothing for the treasures of the rich or the honours of the great. He will not look for the abilities we have manifested, nor the influence we have acquired ; but He will look for our faith. It is His glory that He is “believed on in the world,” and to that He will have respect. This is the jewel for which He is searching. 2. When our Lord comes and looks for faith, He will do so in His most sympathetic character. Our text saith not, When the Son of God cometh, but “When the Son of Man cometh, will He find faith on the earth?” It is peculiarly as the Son of Man that Jesus will sit as a refiner, to discover whether we have true faith or not. 3. Further, I would have you note well that the Son of Man is the most likely person to discover faith if it is to be found. Not a grain of faith exists in all the world except that which He has Himself created. 4. Besides, faith always looks to Christ. There is no faith in the world worth having, but what looks to Him, and through Him to God, for everything. On the other hand, Christ always looks to faith ; there never yet was an eye of faith but what it met the eye of Christ. 5. The Son of Man will give a wise and generous judgment in the matter. Some brethren judge so harshly that they would tread out the sparks of faith ; but it is never so with our gracious Lord ; He does not quench the smoking flax, nor despise the most trembling faith. The tender and gentle Saviour, who never judges too severely, when He comes, shall even He find faith on the earth? 6. Once more, I want to put this question into a striking light by dwelling on the time of the scrutiny. “When the Son of Man cometh,” &c. I know not how long this dispensation of long-suffering will last ; but certainly the longer it continues the more wantonly wicked does unbelief become. 7. I want you to notice the breadth of the region of search. He does not say, shall He find faith among philosophers? When had they any? He does not confine His scrutiny to an ordained ministry or a visible Church ; but He takes a wider sweep—“Shall He find faith on the earth?” As if He would search from throne to cottage, among the learned and among the ignorant, among public men and obscure individuals. Alas, poor earth, to be so void of faith! II. Let us somewhat change the run of our thoughts : having introduced the question as a remarkable one, we will next notice that it is EXCEEDINGLY INSTRUCTIVE IN CONNECTION WITH THE PARABLE OF WHICH IT IS PART. When the Son of Man cometh shall He find upon the earth the faith which prays importunately, as this widow did? Now, the meaning is dawning upon us. We have many upon the earth who pray ; but where are those whose continual coming is sure to prevail? III. In the next place, our text seems to me to be SUGGESTIVE IN VIEW OF ITS VERY FORM. It is put as a question : “When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” 1. I think it warns us not to dogmatize about what the latter days will be. Jesus puts it as a question. Shall He find faith on the earth? 2. This question leads us to much holy fear as to the matter of faith. If our gracious Lord raises the question, the question ought to be raised. 3. As far as my observation goes, it is a question which might suggest itself to the most hopeful persons at this time ; for many processes are in vigorous action which tend to destroy faith. The Scriptures are being criticized with a familiarity which shocks all reverence, and their very foundation is being assailed by persons who call themselves Christians. A chilling criticism has taken the place of a warm, childlike, loving confidence. As one has truly said, “We have now a temple without a sanctuary.” Mystery is discarded that reason may reign. 4. Do you not think that this, put in a question as it is, invites us to intense watchfulness over ourselves? Do you not think it should set us scrutinizing ourselves as our Lord will scrutinize us when He comes? You have been looking for a great many things in yourself, my brother ; let me entreat you to look to your faith. What if love grow cold! IV. My text is very IMPRESSIVE IN RESPECT TO PERSONAL DUTY. “When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” Let faith have a home in our hearts, if it is denied a lodging everywhere else. If we do not trust our Lord, and trust Him much more than we have ever done, we shall deserve His gravest displeasure. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ looking in vain for faith*:—If I venture for a moment to look into the reasons of these things, perhaps I might particularize the following :

It is always in the indolent and grosser nature of man to prefer the present and the visible, to the future and the unseen. The heart gravitates to practical materialism as a stone gravitates to the ground. It is always a special act to make a man feel the invisible, live in the invisible. For in fact, all faith is miracle. And days of great science, such as these, are always likely to be days of proportionate unbelief—because the power of the habit of finding out more and more natural causes, is calculated, unless a man be a religious man, to make him rest in the cause he sees, and not to go on to that higher cause of which all the causes in this world, are, after all, only effects. And familiarity, too, with Divine things—which is a particular characteristic of our age, has in itself a tendency to sap the reverence, which is at the root of all faith. But still more, the character of the age we live in is a rushing selfishness. The race for money is tremendous; men are grown intensely secular; the facilities are increased, and with them, the covetousness. You are living under higher and higher pressure, and everything goes into extremes; all live fast. And the competition of business is overwhelming, and the excitement of fashion intoxicating. How can "faith," which breathes in the shade of prayer and meditation—live in such an atmosphere as this? Let me just throw out one or two suggestions to you about faith. Remember "faith" is a moral grace, and not an intellectual gift. It lives among the affections; its seat is the heart. A soft and tender conscience is the cradle of faith; and it will live and die according to the life you lead. If you would have "faith," you must settle with yourself the authority, the supremacy, and the sufficiency of the Bible. Then, when you have done that, you will be able to deal with promises. Feed upon promises. We take the spiritual character of what we receive into our minds, just as the body assumes the nature of the food it eats. Act out the very little faith you have. Faith is a series of continual progression, and each fresh step is accompanied by a moral effort which reacts to make another. Take care that you are a man of meditative habit. There cannot be faith without daily, calm, quiet seasons of thought. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Loss of faith in the Christian verities*:—I cannot but think that this "faith" is the faith once delivered to the saints, the faith of the gospel, and the creeds—the faith in Christ, the eternal Son of God Incarnate, crucified, risen, ascended, and returning. This faith will be in the pages of Scripture, and in the creeds of the Church. It may not, perhaps, be denied, but it will not be *held*. And yet without the realization of these great eternal verities there can be no faith, in the New Testament sense of the word. Already this faith grows weaker and weaker. It has been said that faith is "turned inward," and a miserable "turning" it is: for what is there *within* the sinner to raise him up to God and unite him to the Supreme? It is the exhibition of the love of God in His Son which breeds faith in the soul. It is the same exhibition which sustains it, and the same which perfects it. (*M. F. Sadler.*)

Vers. 9-14. Two men went up into the temple to pray.—*Whom the Lord receives*:—Observe, from the parable—I. How GOD LOOKS UPON THE HEART, RATHER THAN UPON THE OUTWARD APPEARANCE. It is not the spoken service that is regarded, but the hidden words of the heart. II. THE INSUFFICIENCY OF MAN'S GOOD WORKS TO OBTAIN JUSTIFICATION. III. THE WAY OF JUSTIFICATION IS SHOWN IN WHAT WE ARE TOLD OF THE PUBLICAN. IV. WE SEE WHAT SPIRIT GOD REQUIRES OF AND APPROVES IN US. Not those who are satisfied with themselves are commended of Him, but those who see and deplore their sinfulness. As a bird must first stoop to fly, so must the soul humble itself ere it finds God. "Behold a great wonder," says Augustine, "God is high; exalt thyself, He flees from thee: humble thyself, and He stoops to thee." Because, as the Psalmist says, "Though high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly, but the proud He knoweth afar off." So the Pharisee returned from the temple as poor as he came, while the publican, whom he despised, wondering how he dared to come, returned made rich by God's kiss of forgiveness and peace. Little do men know who among them are blessed. God's angels of joy do not always enter where they most naturally are supposed to go. (*A. H. Currier.*) *Self-exaltation and self-abasement*:—I. SELF-EXALTATION. 1. This spirit is against God, on whom all depend, before whom all men are dust and uncleanness. 2. Is ignorance, no man having real spiritual knowledge could allow this spirit to dwell in him. 3. Is guilty ignorance, for the Old Testament Scriptures expose and condemn this spirit (Ezek. xxi. 26; Deut. xvii. 20, viii. 14; Hab. ii. 4; Isa. lvi. 5). 4. Is pleasant to corrupt human nature, flattering to natural pride. 5. Is contrary to the mind of God. 6. Is a subtle, hypocritical spirit, often

appearing as religious. 7. Deceives the heart it occupies. 8. Defeats itself, for it ends in abasement and shame. II. DESPIISING OTHERS. 1. This spirit is but another form of pride; others are despised in contrast with self, which is exalted. 2. Is against God, breaking both the law and the gospel, which enjoin loving neighbour as self. 3. Is against the precepts and example of Jesus, who despised not the poorest and outcast, the fallen and foul. III. SELF-ABASEMENT. 1. Often branded by worldly men as meanness of spirit or cowardice. 2. Is acceptable to God, and according to Christ's example. 3. May bring on us some loss or inconvenience for a season, that must be borne as a cross. 4. Has blessing now, and recompense of honour hereafter. 5. The chief example of self-abasement being blessed thus, is that of our Lord Himself (Phil. ii. 5-11). 6. In the publican's case, the blessing began at once. Application: 1. "Every one" marks universal rule or principle. 2. Warn those who have not humbled themselves before God (Exod. x. 3). 3. No justification possible for man, but by self-abasement in repentance and faith. 4. The Holy Spirit convinces of sin, &c. 5. Encourage the first thoughts of self-abasement by examples of Ahab (1 Kings xxi. 9), and Manasseh (2 Chron. xxxiii. 12-19). (*Flavel Cook.*) *The Pharisee and the publican*:—I. THE AIM OF THE PARABLE. 1. Stated (ver. 9). 2. Suggestive—(1) That self-righteousness is possible. (2) That self-righteousness and contempt for others are closely allied. (3) That self-righteousness grows from the root of self-deception. (a) The self-righteous calls upon a heart-searching God. (b) The self-righteous despise men. II. NOTICEABLE FEATURES OF THE PARABLE. 1. The contrasted characters. (1) The prayer of the Pharisee. (a) There is thanksgiving—but is it gratitude to God? (b) There is reference to personal excellencies before God—but is it in humility? (c) Thus prayer may be a mockery, and therefore a sin. (2) The prayer of the publican. (a) There is keen remorse—but not despair. (b) There is deep awe in God's presence—but an appeal to His mercy. (c) Thus, the most agonizing prayer may be heartfelt and believing. III. THE LORD'S COMMENT ON THE PARABLE. 1. The self-exalting prayer of the Pharisee He condemns. 2. The contrite petition of the publican He approves. 3. The reality of answers to prayer He affirms. 4. Christ here enunciates a solemn truth (ver. 14). Lessons: 1. Conformity to religious forms no proof of true piety. 2. True penitence ever seen in self-abasement. (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*) *The Pharisee and the publican*:—Our Saviour's design in this parable was—1. To condemn a censorious disposition, a groundless contempt and bad opinion of others. 2. To correct those false notions of religion which lead men to overlook its principal duties. 3. To expose and reprove that part of self-love which makes us proud of our righteousness. 4. To recommend repentance and humility towards God as the first step to amendment. 5. Lastly, to caution us against all pride and conceit in general. (*J. Jortin, D.D.*) *Remarks on the parable*:—1. How vain must be the hope of those who expect heaven because they are not so wicked as others. 2. Let us beware how by comparing ourselves with others we are led to despise them. 3. No sinner, after such an example as that of the publican, can have any excuse for not praying right, immediately. 4. Every one of us must be humbled before God, if we would partake of His mercy. (*N. W. Taylor, D.D.*) *Belief in the virtues of others*:—Who does not believe others virtuous, would be found, were the secrets of his heart and life known, to be himself vicious. We may lay it down as an axiom, that those who are ready to suspect others of being actuated by a regard to self-interest, are themselves selfish. Thieves do not believe in the existence of honesty; nor rakes in virtue; nor mercenary politicians in patriotism; and the reason why worldlings regard religious people as hypocrites is their own want of religion—knowing that were they to profess a warm regard for Christ, the glory of God, and the salvation of souls, they would be hypocrites. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *Satisfaction with external ceremonial acts*:—Let us do this Pharisee justice. He put in a claim for something done, as well as something left undone: "I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess." But this was ceremonial goodness. We must distinguish: moral goodness is goodness always, and everywhere. Justice, mercy, truth, are the same under the tropic and at the pole, in the year 4000 before Christ and 4000 after Christ. But ceremonies are only good at certain times, and under certain circumstances. Fasting, if it make a man peevish, is no duty. Tithes are a way of supporting God's ministers; but the Church or the State may provide another way, and then tithes cease to be duties. Now observe why Pharisaical men find it easier to be content with ceremonial observances than with moral goodness. They are definite acts, they can be counted. Twice a week the ceremony is done. Go over my fields; not a tenth

sheaf or shock is left standing. Search my stalls: not a tenth colt or calf is kept back. But moral goodness is more a state of heart than distinct acts. Take the law of love; you cannot at night count up, and say, "It is all done," for love has no number of acts. (F. W. Robertson.) *The Pharisee and the publican*:—Pharisee and publican, they both went up, as to a common home, to the great national temple. The Pharisee and the publican had this in common—they understood that prayer is a serious business—the highest business of man—that it is the highest and, if I may so say, the most noble, the most remunerative occupation in which a human being can possibly engage. Man has not always thus understood the real capacity of his soul—the real greatness of his destiny. There are thousands in this great city at this moment who do not understand it. Enervated by pleasure, or distracted by pain, absorbed in the pursuit of material objects, driven hither and thither by gusts of passion, slaves of the lust of the eyes or of the pride of life, men forget too easily why they are here at all, and what they have to do in order to fulfil the primal object of existence. When once a man has these fundamental truths well in view, the importance of prayer becomes immediately apparent. Prayer to something—prayer of some kind—is the higher language of humanity in all places, at all times. Not to pray is to fall below the true measure of human activity, just as truly as not to think. It is to surrender the noblest element of that prerogative dignity which marks men off as men from the brutes. Heathens have felt this; Deists have felt it. Jews felt it with an intensity all their own; and, therefore, when the two men, the Pharisee and the publican, went up into the temple to pray, they simply obeyed a law which is as old and wide as human thought. They gave expression to an instinct which cannot be ignored without wronging that which is noblest and best in our common humanity. Not to pray is not merely godless: it is, in the larger sense of the term, inhuman. They both obeyed this common, this imperious instinct; but here the difference begins. It was not the practice of the Pharisee, or the fact of his thankfulness, which made him less justified than the publican. What was it? My brethren, it was simply this—that the Pharisee had no true idea at all present to his mind, impressed upon his heart, of what it is that makes the real, the awful difference between God and His creatures. It is not chiefly that God is self-existent while man's is a dependent form of life. It is that God is, in Himself, in virtue of the necessary laws of His being, that which we are not—that He is perfectly, essentially holy. Until a man sees that the greatest difference of all between himself and his Creator lies, not in metaphysical unlikeness of being, nor yet in the intellectual interval which must separate the finite from the infinite mind, but pre-eminently in the moral chasm which parts a sinful, a sinning will, from the one all-holy, he does not know what he is doing in approaching God. Practically, for such a man, God is still a mere symbol, a name, whose most essential characteristic he has no eye for; and thus, like the Pharisee of old, he struts into the awful presence, as if it were the presence of some moral equal, only invested with larger powers and with a wider knowledge than his own. While the angels above prostrate themselves eternally before the throne, crying, "Holy, holy, holy," proclaiming by that unvaried song the deepest difference between created and uncreated life, the Pharisee has the heart to turn in upon himself an eye of tranquil self-approval—to rejoice, forsooth, that he is not as others—to recount his little charities and his petty austerities—to enwrap himself in a satisfaction which might be natural if a revelation of the most holy had never been made; for observe, that the Pharisee does two things which speak volumes as to the real state of his soul. 1. He compares himself approvingly with others. "I thank Thee that I am not as other men, or even as this publican." He assumes that in God's sight he is better than others. But I ask, has he warrant for the assumption? He supposes that sin is measured solely by its quantity and weight, and not by the opportunities or absence of opportunities in the sinner. We know—every living conscience knows—that it is otherwise. If any one point is clear in our Lord's teaching it is this—that to whom much is given of him shall much be required, and, as a consequence, that in the case of the man to whom much is given a slight offence may be much more serious than a graver crime in another, at least in the eyes of the Eternal Justice. This consideration should prevent a readiness to compare ourselves with any others. We know nothing about them. We know not what they might have been had they enjoyed our opportunities. They may possibly be worse than we are; they may be better. 2. The Pharisee reflects with satisfaction upon himself. He may, he thinks, have done wrong in his day. Everybody, he observes, does so more or less.

He is, as far as that goes, not worse than other people. In other matters he flatters himself that, at least of late years, he is conspicuously better. He has kept out of great sins which the law condemns and punishes. He could never by any possibility have been taken as a member of the criminal classes. He fasts twice a week according to rule: he pays his tithes conscientiously: he is fully in every particular up to the current standard of religious respectability. Surely, he thinks in his secret heart, surely God cannot but feel what he feels himself—that he bears a very high character—that he is entitled to general respect. And the publican has nothing to plead on his own behalf. He may have been a Zaccheus; he may have been a legal robber; but he can think of himself, whatever he was, in one light only—as a sinner standing before one Being only, the holy, the everlasting God. The Pharisee is nothing to him, not because he is indifferent, but because he is mentally absorbed—prostrate before One who has filled his whole mind and heart with a sense of unworthiness. “Out of the deep have I called to Thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice! Oh, let Thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint. If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it? But there is mercy with Thee.” That is his cry. That cry is condensed into the blow on the chest—into the “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” (*Canon Liddon.*)

True thoughts of oneself:—In the old tombs of our cathedrals—in this cathedral three centuries ago—there were frequently two figures on the monuments, one of the deceased king, or knight, or bishop, resting above in his full robes of state as he wore them abroad in life, and another, beneath, of a thin, emaciated skeleton, which recalled to the eyes of the beholder the realities of the grave below. It is well, Christian brethren, to have in thought this double image of ourselves—what we are before the world, if we like, but, in any case, what we are before our God. It was the Pharisee’s misery that he thought only of how he looked to others. It was the publican’s blessing that he cared only for what he was before the eyes of God. Let us struggle, let us pray, while yet we may, for a real knowledge of ourselves. Let us endeavour to keep an account of that inward history which belongs to each one of us, and which will be fully unravelled at the Judgment—to which every day that passes adds its something—of which God knows all. To do this may take trouble, but the result is worth a vast deal of trouble. Anything is better, in religious matters, than that which St. Paul calls “beating the air”—an aimless religion which moves perpetually in a vicious circle, because it has no compass—because it has no object. The more we know of God, the more we shall have reason to be dissatisfied with self—the more earnest will be our cry for help and mercy to Jesus Christ, who took our nature upon Him, and who died upon the cross that He might save the lost, that He might save us. There is no real reason for anxiety if we will but come to Him simply with broken hearts. Now, as in the old time, “He filleth the hungry with good things, but the rich He hath sent empty away.” The Pharisee and the publican stand before Him in the ranks of His Church from age to age. They are, in fact, eternal types of human character, and to the end of time, the world’s judgment between them is falsified, and this man—the publican—goes down to that last home which awaits us all, justified, rather than the other. (*Ibid.*)

The Pharisee and the publican:—Suffer me to attempt to disabuse your minds of some of the misconceptions which have grown up around this parable, and which prevent (as it seems to me) the real point of its teaching coming home to our hearts. 1. In the first place, I think that we generally fail to understand the respective positions of the two men in regard of character. There ought, I think, to be no mistake about it that the Pharisee was the better man of the two in every practical sense. Of course it is possible that this Pharisee was a mere hypocrite, like many of his class, and that his account of himself was false; but there is no hint of such a thing, and it would be a perfectly gratuitous supposition. Taking his own account of himself as substantially true, it cannot be denied that he had much cause to give thanks to God for what he was. If he had thanked God with humility that he was not like other men, remembering that his comparative innocence was due to God’s grace and to the advantages of his position and training, he would have done well. I do not know how we can thank God too much for keeping us back from evil. But he gave thanks that he was not even as that publican, and this of course goes against him in our estimation, because we know that the publican was nearer to heaven than he was. And yet, if he had humbly thanked God that he had been saved from the bad traditions of the publican’s business, and the bad surroundings of the publican’s life, we could not have blamed him. There are some occupations, some ways of making a living, so beset with

temptations, in which a man is so dependent for success upon his own sharp dealings, in which he is so driven to take advantage of the follies and vices of others, that we may well thank God that we have been delivered from them. It is indeed sad to see Christian people entangled in these perilous and hurtful pursuits, obliged to defend themselves from the accusations of conscience by building up false and unchristian principles of morality. 2. Another misconception there is which I wish to point out to you, and that is the mistaken notion (as it seems to me) that the publican was actually justified by his lowly demeanour and self-condemning words. Our Lord does not say that. He says the publican was justified *rather* than the other. I imagine that neither was truly justified, but of the two the publican was nearer being justified than the Pharisee. Far as he yet was from the kingdom of heaven, he was not nearly so far as the Pharisee, for he was in the right way. In his humility he stood as it were on the threshold, and there was nothing to hinder his entering in if he was prepared for the necessary sacrifice; whereas the Pharisee had missed the entrance altogether, and was getting further and further from it. But never let us think that our Saviour meant this for an example of sufficient repentance. If the publican went back, as so many do after the same outbreak of self-reproach, to his exactions and extortions, to his tricks of trade, his petty deceits, and his unrighteous gains—if he went home from the temple to cook his accounts with the government, or to sell up some poor wretch who could not meet his demands; do you think that his beating upon his breast and calling himself a miserable sinner would avail him aught? Nay, it would but increase his condemnation, because it would show that his conscience was alive to his sin. What our Lord means to impress upon us in this parable is the fatal danger of spiritual pride, which made the Pharisee, with all his real cause for thanksgiving, to be further off from the kingdom and righteousness of God than the publican whom he despised. The spirit of self-righteousness is such a blinding spirit; it warps and distorts the whole spiritual vision. What should have been a prayer in the mouth of the self-righteous Pharisee was turned into a glorification of himself; and instead of asking God to make him better, he told God how good he was. And this brings me to the third and last misconception of which I shall speak. It is that of imagining that the spirit of self-righteousness must always take the same form which it presents in the parable; that Pharisaism must always be the proud relying upon the outward observances of religion; but, in fact, as a very little observation will show us, it has as many different forms as there are fashions in religion. The modern British Pharisee amongst ourselves, when he gave thanks that he was not like other men, would never think of speaking like the Pharisee in the parable; he would more probably say something of this sort—"God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, priest-ridden, idolaters, superstitious, or even as this benighted Ritualist. I never fast, I never think of giving tithes," and so on. The error of the Pharisee was in substance this, that he thanked God that he punctually performed those duties which came quite natural to him, and that he sought to turn God's attention to other people's faults by way of exalting his own merits. Now, this is an error which is constantly reappearing under one guise or other. We are always disposed to thank God that we are not as this Dissenter, or as that Romanist, when all the while they may be living nearer to God than we in honesty of intention and purity of heart. We are always apt to imagine that we can commend our faith by protesting against other people's errors, and our practice by condemning faults to which we are not tempted. (*R. Winterbotham, M.A.*)

Acceptable and unacceptable prayer:—1. A contrast in attitude and manner. 2. A contrast in spirit. 3. A contrast in prayer. 4. A contrast in reception. (*J. R. Thomson, M.A.*)

The purpose of the parable:—From the introduction it might be inferred that the chief purpose for which the parable was spoken was to rebuke and subdue the spirit of self-righteousness. To do this effectively is not easy, though that is no reason why it should not be attempted. Another service, however, was probably also kept in view by the Speaker, which was much more likely to be accomplished, viz., to revive the spirit of the contrite, and embolden them to hope in God's mercy. This is a service which contrite souls greatly need to have rendered them, for they are slow to believe that they can possibly be the objects of Divine complacency. Such in all probability was the publican's state of mind, not only before but even after he had prayed. He went down to his house justified in God's sight, but not, we think, in his own. He had not "found peace," to use a current phrase. In technical language, we might speak of him as objectively, but not subjectively, justified. In plain English, the fact was so, but he was not aware

that the fact was so. In saying this, we do not forget that there is an instinct, call it rather the still small voice of the Holy Spirit, which tells a penitent, "there is hope in God," "there is forgiveness with Him, that He may be feared"; "wait for God, as they that wait for the dawn." But a man who beats his breast, and dares not look up, and stands afar off in an attitude which seems an apology for existence, has some difficulty in trusting this instinct. To fear and despond suits his mood rather than to hope. There are physical reasons for this, not to speak of spiritual ones. The whole behaviour of the publican speaks to a great religious crisis going on in his soul. For that beating of the breast, and that downcast eye, and that timid posture, are not a theatrical performance got up for the occasion. They bear witness to a painful, possibly a protracted, soul-struggle. But one who passes through such a crisis suffers in body as well as in mind. His nerves are sorely shaken, and in this physical condition he is apt to become a prey to fear and depression. He starts at his own shadow, dreads the postman, trembles when he opens a letter lest it should contain evil tidings, can scarce muster courage to go into a dark room, or to put out the light when he goes to bed. How hard for a man in this state to take cheerful views of his spiritual condition, to rejoice in the sunlight of Divine grace. In the expressive phrase of Bunyan, used with reference to himself when he was in a similar state, such an one is prone rather to "take the shady side of the street." Is it improbable that one object Christ had in view in uttering this parable and the judgment with which it winds up, was to take such contrite and fear-stricken ones by the hand and conduct them over to the sunny side? (*A. B. Bruce, D.D.*)

*Forgiveness most needed:—*A friend of mine—a missionary preacher—being once called upon to give spiritual consolation to a sick man on the point of death, asked him what he could do for him. "Pray for me," was the reply. My friend said that he would do so most willingly, but added, "For what shall I ask?" The man answered, "You know best." The preacher told him that this was not so, and that he, himself, could alone know what he wanted. Still the dying man would say nothing but, "You know best. I leave it to you." At length my friend left him, promising to return in a short time, and hoping that then he might be able to say what it was he wanted to pray for. When the preacher returned, the man directly said, "I have been a great sinner; I want forgiveness."

(*Bishop Walsham How.*) *After confession of sin comes forgiveness:—*We do not always know that we are forgiven; we are not told that the publican knew he was pardoned, although I think that as he went down to his house he must have had some sense of the fact that he was accepted of God. But still we do not always know of our forgiveness. I once visited a canal boatman on his death-bed, and I never remember to have seen a man more affected or more repentant of his sins. Yet he could not grasp the fact of his forgiveness. I tried all I could to bring it home to him, but unsuccessfully. Yet in my own mind I have no doubt that he was forgiven. In order to be pardoned I do not think it necessary to have a firm conviction that we are pardoned. In fact, it is logically absurd to think so.

(*Ibid.*) *The humble prayer the best:—*You can fill an empty jug with clear water from the spring; but it would be foolishness to bring to the spring a jug already full. The Lord has no blessing for the heart that is full of haughtiness; that He reserves for the heart emptied of self. And remember that, after all, it is the worthiest who are the most humble. It is the best filled stalk of corn that bends its head the lowliest. (*Sunday School Times.*) *The Church is a place for prayer:—*These two men went up to the temple "to pray"—not to meet their friends, nor that they might comply with a respectable custom, nor for the purpose of agreeably passing away an hour in varying the ordinary tedium of every-day engagements. No, but to pray. And surely, this should be our great object when we come up to the temple of God. Many seem to think, that to hear the sermon is the great end they have in view when they enter a church; but God has said, "My house shall be called an house of prayer." If we had a petition to present to an earthly monarch, our great endeavour on entering the presence chamber would be to approach the throne, and make our wants and desires known. We would not think it the most important part of the proceeding to have a little conversation with the servants or attendants that stood around, nor would we feel satisfied by their giving us some information as to the character of the august personage who is indeed present himself, the way in which his favour may be conciliated, or his gifts procured. These things might be very important, but the king, the king is the absorbing idea—the servant is a minor consideration. (*A. Gladwell, B.A.*) *The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself.—Lessons*

from the Pharisee's prayer :—There are three cautions which the Pharisee impresses on us; "for these things were written for our learning," "he being dead, yet speaketh." And in the first place, let us beware of pride. This is the great lesson the parable inculcates. Spiritual pride incapacitates a man for receiving the blessings of the gospel; it is the great obstacle which the Spirit of God has to struggle with and overthrow. Secondly, let us beware of formality in religion. We are all born Pharisees—more anxious to appear than to be Christians. To conclude, let us beware of resting in anything short of the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. (*A. Gladwell, B.A.*) *Pharisaical prayers* :—"God, I thank Thee"—such in spirit, and almost in word, was the expression of the great Roman historian, Tacitus—"I thank Thee I am not as the miserable sect called by the infamous name of Christians, odious to all mankind." "God, we thank Thee," said the philosopher of France, "that we are not like those benighted men who converted the barbarous tribes, or erected the Gothic cathedrals." "I thank Thee," said the splendid Pope Leo X., "that I am not as this ignorant monk, Martin Luther." "God, we thank Thee," said the great movers of the political and social revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in England, "that we are not as those fanatics," the blind poet of Bunhill Row, and the wandering tinker of Bedford, or the scrupulous bishop who could not accept the Act of Settlement, or the Lincolnshire pastor who spent his long life in itinerant preaching; and yet those early Christian martyrs, those mediæval missionaries and monk of Wittenberg, were mightier in the long run even than Tacitus, or the encyclopædists of France, or the philosophers of the Renaissance. And those wayward Christians in England, as they seemed to be, John Milton, the author of "Paradise Lost," John Bunyan, the author of "The Pilgrim's Progress," Bishop Ken, author of the Morning and Evening Hymns, John Wesley, the author of the religious revival in England, went down to their graves as much deserving of the praise of true statesmen and philosophers, even as Clarendon and Bolingbroke, as Walpole and Hume. (*Dean Stanley.*) *The prayer of pride* :—When Philip, king of Macedonia, laid siege to the fair city of Samos, he told the citizens that he came a-wooing to it; but the orator well replied, that it was not the fashion in their country to come a-wooing with a fife and a drum: so here we may behold this Pharisee in the posture of a beggar or petitioner, "going up to the temple to pray," and yet telling God he standeth in no need of Him; as if, saith Chrysostom, a beggar, that were to crave an alms, should hide his ulcers, and load himself with chains, and rings, and bracelets, and clothe himself in rich and costly apparel; as if a beggar should ask an alms in the robes of a king. His "heart did flatter him in secret, and with his mouth he did kiss his hands," as Job speaketh (Job xxxi. 27). Coming before his Physician, he hideth his sores, and sheweth his sound and healthful parts, in a dangerous case; like a man struck in a vein, that voideth his best blood, and retaineth his worst. And this is against the very nature of prayer; which should lay us at the feet of God, as nothing before Him; which should raise itself and take its flight on the wings of humility and obedience; which should contract the mind in itself, and secure it from pride; which should depress the soul in itself, and defend it from vainglory; which should so fill it that there may be no room for hypocrisy. Then our devotion will ascend as incense, "pure and holy" (Exod. xxx. 35), seasoned with the admiration of God's majesty, and the detestation of ourselves. (*R. Farindon, D.D.*) *The Pharisee's mistake* :—The mistake of this Pharisee was, that he compared his outward life with the lives of disreputable people, and so took to himself the credit of exalted superiority. He should have looked in the other direction. If you would come to a just estimate of your character, look at those better than you, and compare yourself with them; look at those whom God has set for our examples, the prophets, the apostles, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and measure yourself by them; look at the holy ten commandments, and try yourself rigidly by their requirements; and this Pharisaic trust and pride in your own goodness will melt away like frost before the sun. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*) *An egotistical utterance* :—With what prominence and frequency he flourishes the big "I!" "I thank thee that I am not as other men." "I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." The whole utterance contains thirty-three words, of which one refers to God, five are "I's," and the remaining twenty-seven are either commendations of himself, or allusions to others in unfavourable contrast with his own superiority. Self—self—self—in utmost intensity runs through the whole of it. There is

not a trace of genuine devotion in the entire piece. There is a marvellous thrusting forward of ego, to which all the references to God, the temple, and other people, are made subservient. (*Ibid.*) *The fine prayer*:—The celebrated Professor Francke, who founded the great Orphan Asylum, in Halle, was walking one day in the fields with one of his colleagues. All at once the voice of a person praying drew their attention. They stopped, and on looking observed behind a bush two children on their knees, one of whom was praying fervently to God. The two professors listened, and were edified with the devotion which the young Christians seemed to possess. When the prayer was ended, the children rose. "Well," said the one who led the devotions, with a self-complacent air, "didn't I make a fine prayer?" This last remark caused Francke and his companion a painful surprise. But after a moment's reflection, one of them remarked: "This child has shown openly what often passes in our minds. How often, when God has disposed us to pray with some fervour in presence of our brethren, do we rise from our knees with a secret vanity; and if shame did not restrain us, we should ask with this child, 'have not I made a fine prayer?'" *The poorest the best*:—Lucian, in one of his dialogues, relates the case of two men going into the theatre to play on the harp: one harp was covered with gold and jewels, but its strings broke, and the admiration of the spectators was changed to contempt; the harp of the other man was a very poor and common one, yet it gave out the sweetest sound, and delighted all. The former harp represents the Pharisee, who plays upon his outside worth and fair appearance; the latter harp resembles the poor publican. (*Preacher's Promptuary.*) *Need, not magnificence, the best aid to prayer*:—When Morales, the painter, was invited by Philip the Second to court, he came in such a magnificent costume, that the King, in anger, ordered a sum of money to be paid him, and so dismissed him. The next time they met he appeared in a very different dress, poor, old, and hungry, which so touched the heart of the King, that he immediately provided him with a revenue which kept him in comfort for all the future. So when men come to the throne of grace it is not their magnificence but their very want which touches the heart of God. (*W. Bazendale.*) *Self-praise in prayer*:—His prayer is like the pillar of brass which Trajan erected to himself in Rome, and which he covered with the record of his own triumphs. His prayer is a sort of monument over the tomb of his own dead heart, upon which he inscribes his fancied virtues. (*J. Wells.*) **GOD BE MERCIFUL TO ME A SINNER.** *Humility of prayer*:—I. WHEN DO WE PRAY WITH HUMILITY? Learn this from the publican. It is when we acknowledge the infinite majesty of God and our own misery. II. WHY MUST WE BE HUMBLE IN OUR PRAYERS? 1. God demands that we should pray with humility. 2. Reason itself teaches the same. Who would pay any attention to a proud beggar? III. WHAT WE ARE TO DO IN ORDER TO LEARN TO PRAY WITH HUMILITY. A humble prayer can only proceed from a humble heart. Therefore endeavour to become humble of heart, by employing the following means: 1. Being convinced that humility is a grace of God, pray to Him that He may give you this beautiful virtue. 2. Call frequently to your mind what you are in real truth. (1) What is your single self in comparison with the more than one thousand millions of men? You seem to disappear in the prodigious multitude. (2) What are you relative to your body? Dust and ashes. (3) What are you relative to your soul? True, your soul is the image and likeness of God; but what have you made of this Divine image by your sins of the past and of the present? And as to the future, when you reflect on your sins, have you not every reason to tremble before the severe judgment of God? 3. When you approach God in prayer, call to mind who God is in all His splendour and majesty, and who you are—a wretched sinner, a beggar sunk into the greatest misery, a culprit sentenced to death. And then, overwhelmed with the burden of your misery, speak from the depth of your heart to Him who alone is able to deliver you. And if you are troubled with distractions during your prayer, humble yourself again before your Lord and Master, and implore Him that He may not suffer you to commit new sins by negligence; but cease not praying in spite of distractions, and your prayer will be acceptable to the Lord. (*J. Schmitt.*) *The publican's prayer*:—This is the only thought which befits a living man in the presence of his Creator. What other link can come between the God of holiness and love, and the sinner, but mercy! "God be merciful." I. In these few words of the contrite soul there is AN ARGUMENT WHICH GOD WILL NEVER REJECT. It is the plea God loves. "God be merciful to me because I am a sinner." David knew that blessed argument when he said:

"Lord pardon my iniquity, for it is great." God has made a book, and it is for sinners; God has filled it with promises, and they are for sinners. He has given His own Son, and it is only for sinners. II. THE WAY TO OBTAIN THIS FITTING CONDITION OF MIND. It is to be reached in the same way as the publican attained it. His whole mind appears to have been occupied with God, the rest was only secondary. Most persons when they try to cultivate penitence, look into themselves. It is the study of God, not of ourselves, which makes the penitent mind. Nothing makes sin seem so sinful and so hateful as the contemplation of the love of God. III. WHOEVER WOULD BE TRULY A PENITENT MUST HAVE RIGHT VIEWS OF MERCY. It is an easy thing to say "God have mercy upon me." Upon the just apprehension of what this mercy is depends the whole power and acceptability of the prayer. If God, simply by an act of sovereignty, forgave a sin and remitted the punishment, it would not be mercy. Before God can show Himself merciful to a sinner He must receive a satisfaction and an equivalent. That satisfaction is Christ. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *The cry that opens heaven:—* 1. When I come to analyze this prayer of the publican, I find it, in the first place, an appreciation of his sinfulness. He proved himself honourable, and there were a great many admirable things about him, and yet he utters this cry of self-abnegation. What was the matter with him? Had he lost his reason? Had some low, contemptible cowardice seized upon him? O, no. For the first time in all his life he saw himself. He saw he was a sinner before God, utterly helpless and undone. At what moment that discovery flashed upon him I know not; but standing there in the court of the temple, surrounded by all the demonstrations of holiness and power, his soul has extorted from it the anguish-bitten cry of my text. 2. I pursue the analysis of my subject still further, and I find in this publican's prayer the fact that he expected nothing except mercy. He might have said: "I am honest in all my dealings. When ten dollars are paid to me for tax, I hand it over to the Government. If you look over all my books you will find them right. My life has been upright and respectable." He made no such plea. He comes and throws himself on God's mercy. Are there any in this house who propose, by making their life right, to commend themselves to God? Do you really think you can break off your bad habits? Where then are we to be saved? Is there no balm for this mortal wound of my soul? Is there no light for this Arctic night? Is there no hope for a lost sinner? Yes; and that is what I came to tell you about. Mercy. Free mercy. Pardoning mercy. Suffering mercy. Infinite mercy. Omnipotent mercy. Everlasting mercy. 3. I push this analysis of my text one step further, and I find that this man saw that mercy would be of no advantage to him unless he pleaded for it. He did not say: "If I am to be saved, I will be saved, and if I am to be lost, I will be lost. There is nothing for me to do." He knew that a thing worth having is worth asking for, and therefore, he makes the agonizing cry of my text. Mark you, it was an earnest prayer, and if you look through this Bible you will see that all the prayers that were answered were earnest prayers. But, mark you this, the publican's prayer was not only earnest, it was humble. The Pharisee looked up; the publican looked down. I remark further, there was a ringing confidence in that prayer. He knew he would get the blessing if he asked for it; and he did get it. (*De W. Talmage, D.D.*) *A sinner praying for mercy:—* I. THE BLESSING HE ASKS IS MERCY: "God be merciful to me." Did you ever ask yourselves what mercy is? It means, in common language, pity shown to the miserable for pity's sake. Strictly speaking, it ceases to be mercy, if the miserable have any claim on us. It takes then the character of justice. And mercy has exactly the same meaning in Holy Scripture. It signifies God's kindness extended to miserable man of God's own pure goodness. II. We may turn now to THE CHARACTER IN WHICH THIS MAN PRAYS. He says, "God be merciful to me a sinner." He prays in a character that corresponds exactly with the temple-services, and also with the blessing he supplicates. There at the altar falls the sacrifice, and who needs a sacrifice but the sinful? He pleads for mercy, and who needs mercy but the guilty? And it a blessed thing for a sinful man to be thus willing to take his own proper ground when he prays. He must take it, if he means to obtain God's mercy. All the mercy that exists in God, boundless as it is, is mercy for sinners. III. Observe now THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS WORSHIPPER PRAYS. And here again all is in harmony. His manner accords well with his character and his petition. 1. He is a sinner, and consequently he prays most humbly. 2. This publican prayed also very earnestly. He "smote

upon his breast." No matter what led him to do so. It was doubtless a mixture of feelings. Indignation against himself, a sense of his own pollution and misery, a thrilling apprehension of coming wrath—these things took possession of his mind; they agitated him; and like a man driven to extremities he could not restrain his agitation, he smote himself as he cried for mercy. He became exceedingly earnest in his prayer for it. He prayed for nothing else; he thought of nothing else. Mercy is everything with him. IV. There is yet another circumstance in the parable to be noticed—THE SUCCESS OF THIS MAN'S PRAYER. 1. It was, first, abundant success, success beyond his petition. 2. His success was also immediate. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *The publican's prayer*:—I. Observe THE OBJECT OF THE PUBLICAN'S PRAYER. 1. The light of nature teaches man there is a God, a supreme Being, and Governor of the world. There is not a rational creature to be found upon the earth but admits this truth. And, hence, all attend to some kind of worship. 2. Revelation makes known to man the true God in His nature and attributes, and exhibits His conduct towards the children of men. 3. But we must remember that God is never savingly known, even by those who have the Volume of Divine revelation, by the unassisted powers of nature. Hence, in addition to Revelation, it is necessary that the mind be enlightened, in order to its perception of Divine truth. And to do this is the exclusive prerogative of the Holy Spirit. II. THE SUBJECT OF HIS PETITION—"mercy"; and the description he gives of himself—"a sinner." "God be merciful to me a sinner!" 1. On the part of man, here are two things implied: (1) Misery. A sense of deep wretchedness, as being sunk in iniquity—totally depraved, and in every part polluted. The truly awakened sinner feels that he is spiritually diseased; and that, "from the crown of his head to the soul of his foot, he is wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores." (2) A deep sense of unworthiness. The truly contrite soul brings no qualifications; no merit, no sacrifice of his own; but comes as a sinner, and having for his only plea, the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. 2. There are also two things, in the exercise of mercy, on the part of God, which the spiritually enlightened sinner especially regards. (1) Pity, or compassion. When the Holy Spirit brings the sinner to a saving knowledge of God, He enables him to look up to his heavenly Father, as the God of compassion. (2) Pardon, or forgiveness. "I, even I," says God, "am He that pardoneth iniquity, transgression, and sin." The Holy Spirit teaches all true believers that the justice of God is for them, and on their side, as well as His mercy. III. WHAT THIS PRAYER IMPLIES, WHEN OFFERED TO GOD IN A PROPER SPIRIT. 1. True humiliation for sin. Even after the manifestation of forgiving love, the man who enjoys it feels deeply humbled before God. 2. This prayer, when offered in a proper spirit, implies evangelical repentance. God says (*Ezek. xxxvi. 31*). 3. This prayer implies submission to the righteous judgment of God. In conclusion, we learn from this subject—1. That the ground (or cause) of a sinner's justification is out of himself. 2. Learn that no outward reformation, even though accompanied by the strictest attention to religious duties, can save the soul. 3. Learn that no sensible sinner, no humble penitent, need feel discouraged in approaching the God of mercy for pardon. 4. Learn, finally, to beware lest you make the mercy of God an excuse for your continuance in sin. (*T. Gibson, M.A.*) *A sermon for the worst man on earth*:—I. THE FACT OF SINNERSHIP IS NO REASON FOR DESPAIR. 1. This man who was a sinner yet dared to approach the Lord. Emphatically he applies to himself the guilty name. He takes the chief place in condemnation, and yet he cries, "God be merciful to me the sinner." If this man who was the sinner found forgiveness, so also shall you if you seek it in the same way. 2. Next, remember that you may not only find encouragement in looking at the sinner who sought his God, but in the God whom he sought. Sinner, there is great mercy in the heart of God. 3. Moreover, the conception of salvation implies hope for sinners. That salvation which we preach to you every day is glad tidings for the guilty. Salvation by grace implies that men are guilty. The very name of Jesus tells us that He shall save His people from their sins. 4. Let me further say that, inasmuch as that salvation of God is a great one, it must have been intended to meet great sins. Think you God would have given His dear Son to die as a mere superfluity? 5. If you will think of it again, there must be hope for sinners, for the great commands of the gospel are most suitable to sinners. 6. If you want any other argument—and I hope you do not—I would put it thus: great sinners have been saved. All sorts of sinners are being saved to-day. II. A SENSE OF SINNERSHIP CONFERS NO RIGHT TO MERCY. You will wonder why I mention this self-evident truth; but I

must mention it because of a common error which does great mischief. This man was very sensible of his sin inasmuch that he called himself **THE SINNER**; but he did not urge his sense of sin as any reason why he should find mercy. I want you, therefore, to learn that a sense of sin gives no man a right to grace. III. My third observation is this: **THE KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR SINNERSHIP GUIDES MEN TO RIGHT ACTION.** When a man has learned of the Holy Spirit that he is a sinner, then by a kind of instinct of the new life, he does the right thing in the right way. 1. This man went straight to God. 2. He went with a full confession of sin. 3. He appealed to mercy only. IV. **THE BELIEVING CONFESSION OF SINNERSHIP IS THE WAY OF PEACE.** "God be merciful to me a sinner," was the prayer, but what was the answer? Listen to this: "This man went down," &c. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The penitent's prayer*:—The arrangement of these words is perfect. On one side is Deity—alone—without an attribute, far grander in that solitude than if ten thousand titles had been added to His name—"God." On the other—thrown into the greatest possible distance—is man; and he, too, is alone; and his whole being is put into one single expression—it is not a description, it is a synonymy—"me, a sinner." And between these two extremes—spanning the distance, and uniting the ends—is one link—simple—grand—sufficient—"mercy," nothing but "mercy"—"God be merciful to me a sinner." I may mention, for the sake of those who do not happen to know it, that there are three points in the original, which could not well be rendered in our version; but which make this strong language stronger still. There it is, "the God," and "the sinner"; as if the publican wished to give the greatest possible definiteness to all his expressions;—"the God"—the good God—"be merciful to me"; as though he were the only man on the face of the earth who needed the forgiveness—no comparisons, no distractions, no deductions; the mind concentrated, the mind absorbed, upon the one guilty self, "*The God be merciful to me the sinner.*" And in the very phrase which he selects—"be merciful,"—there is rolled up atonement; it is, "be propitiate." Doubtless that man had been taught to see mercy all in sacrifice; to recognize no pardon out of covenant, and no covenant out of blood. "*The God be propitiate to me the sinner.*" I think you will see, brethren, that there is great force in that distinction of language. Weakness always deals in generalities. A man is general in his thoughts and his expressions till he begins to be in earnest; and the very moment he begins to be in earnest, he is individual. Hear men, as men generally speak about God. They say, "the Almighty"; and they say, "the Almighty is very good," and, "we are all of us bad," and, "none of us are as good as we ought to be"; that is the language of natural religion, if, indeed, it be religion at all. It is loose, because it cannot afford to be accurate; it shuns just what a spiritual man loves—personality. How different is the teaching of the Holy Ghost! The soul cannot be particular enough; it lives in exactness; it individualizes everything. "*The God be propitiate to me the sinner.*" To make true prayer—or, which is the same thing—to make true peace, two things are wanted. Some persons, to a certain extent, attain the one, and some the other; while, because they do not, at the same moment, attain both, the end is frustrated. The truth lies in unity. The one thing is to exalt God very high; and the other, to demean self very low. If you lift up the attributes of God, and do not proportionably debase yourself, you are in danger of running into presumption. If you take deep views of your sinfulness, and do not, at the same time, magnify the grace of God, you will run into despair. A God high in His glory, and self down in the dust, that is best; and let me advise you to look well to it whether you are doing these two things with parallel steps. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *The ingredients of real mercy*:—To make forgiveness—to make real "mercy"—four things are required. God must be Himself just in doing it. The forgiven man must be perfectly sure that he is forgiven. The forgiveness must not incline the forgiven man to go and sin again, but it must stop him. And the rest of mankind must see no encouragement in that man's pardon to go and do like him, but rather see the strongest argument not to do it. Now, in God's way of "mercy" these four things meet. First, God is just, because He never remits a penalty till He has received an equivalent; the sinning soul has died in its covenant Head, and God keeps His word; and the very same attribute which compels God to punish man out of Christ, in Christ obliges God to pardon Him. Secondly, that forgiven man can never doubt his acceptance, because he knows that the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ outweighs the universe. The infinity of Christ is in the ransom. Either he is perfectly pardoned, or the Son of God has died in vain. Thirdly, that pardoned man cannot go and sin again, because, unless he loves

Christ, he is not forgiven; and if he does love Christ, he cannot love the sin which crucified Him; he cannot go and do lightly again that which grieves and wounds Him whom now his soul holds more precious than all the world. And, fourthly, the whole world in that man has seen sin in its greatest possible magnitude, because it has seen sin drag down to this earth and crucify the Lord of life and glory; the law is more honourable than if the whole world had perished; since, sooner than one iota of that law should be set aside, the Son of God has kept that law by His life, and satisfied it by His death; so sin is made viler by the very act which cancels it; and pardon is no more the parent of peace, than peace is the mother of holiness. That is mercy. (*Ibid.*) *The publican's prayer*:—I. The substance of this prayer evinces deep CONVICTION OF SIN. II. HELPLESSNESS. He admits the righteousness of his condemnation, and sues for mercy. III. FAITH. He took hold of God's promises, and made his appeal. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Earnestness is brief*:—Earnestness does not express itself in long, inflated, pompous sentences. It is brief; it is simple. The moment has arrived when victory, long doubtful as the tide of success ebbed and flowed, may be won by one splendid, dashing, daring attack—the order is given in one brief word, Charge! On the distant waves a flag is seen, now sinking in the trough and again rising on the crest of the foaming billows; and beneath that signal, clinging to the fragment of a vessel that lies many fathoms down in the depths of ocean, are two human forms—and all the cry that sounds from stem to stern is, “A wreck, a wreck!” and all the order, “Lower the boat!” words hardly uttered when she drops on the water, and, pulled by stout rowers, is leaping over the waves to the rescue. One late in the deserted streets sees the smoke creep, and the flames begin to flash and flicker from a house whose tenants are buried in sleep; he bounds to the door and thunders on it—all his cry, “Fire, fire!” Peter sinks amid the boisterous waves of Galilee and all the prayer of lips the cold water kisses is, as he stretches out his hand to Jesus, “Save me, I perish!” And with the brief, urgent earnestness of one who seeing his danger, knows that there is no time, and believing in God's great mercy, feels that there is no need for long prayers, the publican, like a man who in falling over a crag catches the arm of a friendly tree, throws his whole soul into this cry, these few, blessed, accepted words, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*) *Justification as the result of prayer*:—Brethren, we have here a pregnant word as to the possibilities and capabilities of worship. Two men went up into the temple to pray, and one of the two returned to his house justified. What is it to be justified? All true doctrine teaches us a great difference between being justified and being sanctified. Justification is an act, sanctification is a process. Both are of God. But whereas the one may be the act of a moment, restoring the sinner to the Divine acceptance by a simple forgiveness through the blood of Jesus, the other in most cases is the work of a lifetime, consisting in the gradual formation of a new character by the daily influence of the Spirit of Grace. There are other uses of the word, but this is its meaning when it is applied accurately. Now, of course, there is a sense in which justification stands at the beginning of the Christian course, and needs not, and indeed suffers not to be repeated. When a man comes to himself in the far country, and says, “I will arise and go to my Father,” and when he not only says but does, and not only starts for, but arrives at, the home where the Father dwells, and receives from Him the kiss of peace, and the ring of the everlasting covenant then and there, that is his justification. God for Christ's sake freely forgives, bestows upon him the Holy Spirit, and, unless some terrible thing should happen afterwards, sets him in the sure way, of which the end is heaven. “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” But our Lord Himself here speaks of a man going down to his house from a particular act of worship either justified or not justified. And this seems to give an importance, quite beyond our common estimate, to such a service as this in which we are now engaged. You may say, indeed, that this particular occasion was the justification, in the first and fullest sense, of this publican. Now first, you may say, he felt himself a sinner, now first he sought mercy, and when he went back to his house he went back for the first time, and for all time a pardoned and accepted man. But this idea of restriction seems to have been imported into the parable. Is there anything in our Lord's words to imply that either the prayer of the Pharisee or the prayer of the publican was a single and isolated one, never offered before, suggested by some crisis of the life, sudden and not to be repeated? Was it not rather the habit of the two minds thus to express themselves? Would the Pharisee be a different man to-morrow, not the

exception, and not the perfection that he now thinks himself? And would the publican when he came again to the temple be no longer the sinner of sinners, but an improved, and altered, and sanctified man? Where is all this in the parable? If not, then the justification spoken of may be repeated to-morrow, and we have before us the thought of the issues of worship rather than the thought of the issues of a fundamental spiritual change. This man went down to his house justified, on this particular occasion, rather than the other. The justification spoken of is forgiveness, or absolution. Brethren, the justified man wants forgiveness; the man who has bathed the whole body needs afterwards to wash the feet. This man has brought his load of sin with him to the temple; he has come guilty and burdened, conscience accusing, and convicted. He has left undone that which he ought to have done since he last worshipped, he has done that which he ought not to have done since he last worshipped, there is no health in him; this morning he has come, just as he is, to the God of his life; he has sought no intervention, and no intermeditation of priest, or of sacrifice; he has come straight to God. He has taken for granted God's knowledge of each of his transgressions, as well as of that root and spring of evil, which is the fallen and sinful self; and now, pre-supposing all this, he has simply to ask for mercy, which is, being interpreted, kindness to the undeserving, and he has received the answer of peace, and so now he goes back to his house justified. What of the other? His return is not described; it is left under the veil of a parable. The publican is justified beyond, or in comparison with, or rather than, the Pharisee—such is the Greek. Dare we suggest on the strength of this reticence two kinds or two degrees of justification, one the higher and more complete, but the other, though lower, perhaps sufficient? Let us look at the prayer, and judge by it of the answer, "God, I thank thee for my satisfactory condition, for my exemplary conduct, for my exceptional, my unique freedom from the otherwise universal wickedness of mankind." What is there here to suggest the thought of a justification, of which the other name is absolution, or forgiveness? What is there here to be forgiven? Not having asked, he surely has not received, a boon which is only acceptable, and only appropriate to the sinner. (*Dean Vaughan.*) *Christian humility*:—"The best of God's people have abhorred themselves. Like the spire of a steeple, *minimus in summo*, we are least at the highest. David, a king, was yet like a weaned child." Manton is not very clear about the steeple, but he means that the higher a spire rises towards heaven the smaller it becomes, and thus the more elevated are our spirits the less shall we be in our own esteem. Great thoughts of self and great grace never go together. Self-consciousness is a sure sign that there is not much depth of grace. He who over-values himself under-values his Saviour. He who abounds in piety is sure to be filled with humility. Light things, such as straws and feathers, are borne aloft; valuable goods keep their places, and remain below, not because they are chained or riveted there, but by virtue of their own weight. When we begin to talk of our perfection, our imperfection is getting the upper hand. The more full we become of the presence of the Lord the more shall we sink in our own esteem, even as laden vessels sink down to their water-mark, while empty ships float aloft. Lord, make and keep me humble. Lift me nearer and nearer to heaven, and then I shall grow less and less in my own esteem. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Sin a personal affront to God*:—"Sin is a personal affront, whose bitter consequences only the forgiveness of God Himself can remove, and toward which, with the publican, we must implore Him to be merciful. It does not read, "Nature be merciful," nor "Laws of my constitution be merciful," nor "Society be merciful," nor, "I will be merciful to myself," but, "God be merciful;"—nor yet, "God be merciful to sin in general," but "to me a sinner." (*Bishop Huntington.*) *A negro's prayer*:—"My uncle, the Rev. Dr. Samuel K. Talmage, of Augusta, Georgia, was passing along the street one day and he met a black man, who stepped out into the street, leaving the pavement, took his hat off, and bowed very lowly in the presence of my uncle. My uncle said to him: "My dear fellow, why do you stand there and make such a low bow to me?" "Oh," he replied, "massa, I owe you more than any one on earth." "Why," inquired my uncle, "what do you mean?" "Well," said the man, "I was going along the street the other night, and I had a heavy burden on my back, and I was hungry and sick, and I saw your church was lighted, and I thought I would just stand at the door a minute and listen, and I put down my burden and listened, and I heard you say: 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' And you said that any poor soul that could utter that prayer from the heart could get to heaven, and I shouldered my burden and I went on home, and I went in the

house, and I sat down, and I folded my hands, and I said : ' God be merciful to me a sinner,' but I felt no better ; I felt worse. And then I got down on my knees, and I said it again : ' God be merciful to me a sinner.' I felt no better. It was darker than it was before. And then, massa, I threw myself down on my face and cried out : ' God be merciful to me a sinner,' and I kept on crying that until after awhile I saw a light a good ways off, and it came nearer to me, and nearer to me, and it got all bright, and I felt very happy, and I thought the next time I saw you coming down the street I would bow very low before you, and I would stand out of your way, and I would tell you how much I owed to you." (*De W. Talmage, D.D.*)

As a sinner :—When the late Duke of Kent, the father of Queen Victoria, was expressing, in the prospect of death, some concern about the state of his soul, his physician endeavoured to soothe his mind by referring to his high respectability, and his honourable conduct in the distinguished situation in which Providence had placed him, when he stopped him short, saying, "No; remember, if I am to be saved, it is not as a prince, but as a sinner."

The publican's prayer used in death :—Many well-known Christians have died with the publican's prayer on their lips. Archbishop Usher did so. William Wilberforce, the liberator of the slaves, said when dying, "With regard to myself, I have nothing to urge but the poor publican's plea, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'" When the famous Grotius was a-dying at Rostock, the minister reminded him of the publican's prayer, "That publican, Lord, am I," said Grotius, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and then he died. (*J. Wells.*)

The nature and necessity of humility :—I. We are to consider THE NATURE OF HUMILITY. There is the more occasion for describing this gracious exercise of heart with peculiar accuracy and precision, because mankind are naturally disposed to misunderstand and misrepresent it. Mr. Hume scrupled not to say, that "humility ought to be struck off from the catalogue of virtues, and placed on the catalogue of vices." This must have been owing to his gross ignorance, or extreme malignity. The most charitable supposition is, that he really mistook a mere selfish and painful sense of natural inferiority for true humility. This leads me to observe that a man's humbling himself is something very different from his having a mistaken and reluctant sense of his own inferiority in relation to his fellow mortals. Humility is likewise different from submission, which seems to resemble it. Submission is the respect which an inferior justly owes to a superior. Furthermore, humility is something different from condescension, which is the part of a superior, and consists in stooping to an inferior. Thus the Creator may condescend to a creature, the prince to a subject, the rich to the poor, and the aged to the young. But though condescension stoops, yet it is by no means degrading. Real condescension always displays a noble and amiable spirit. I may now safely say that humility essentially consists in self-abasement, which is self-degradation, or a voluntary sinking, not only below others, but below ourselves. It is, therefore, wholly founded in guilt. None but guilty creatures have any cause or reason for abasing themselves. But every guilty creature ought to abase himself, whether he is willing or unwilling to perform the mortifying duty. II. SINNERS MUST HUMBLE THEMSELVES BEFORE GOD, IN ORDER TO OBTAIN PARDONING MERCY. 1. God cannot consistently receive them into His favour, before they voluntarily humble themselves for their transgressions in His sight. 2. It is impossible for sinners to receive Divine mercy before they take their proper places, and are willing to sink as low as Divine justice can sink them. Improvement: 1. If humility essentially consist in self-abasement for sin, then we may safely suppose that neither God the Father, nor the Lord Jesus Christ, ever exercised any affection which may be strictly called humility. 2. If humility consists in self-abasement, we may clearly see how low sinners must lie before God, in order to obtain His pardoning mercy. 3. If humility consists in a free and voluntary self-abasement for sin, then it is the most amiable and shining exercise of a holy heart. 4. Finally, it appears from this whole discourse that nothing short of real, cordial self-abasement, can qualify any of our sinful race to obtain and enjoy the happiness of heaven. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*) *Humility* :—An old writer of the Church says of humility that "it is the great ornament and jewel of the Christian religion. All the world, all that we are, and all that we have, our bodies and our souls, our actions and our sufferings, our conditions at home, our accidents abroad, our many sins and our seldom virtues, are as so many arguments to make our souls dwell low in the deep valley of humility." A moment's thought will convince you of the truth of this. Of what are you proud, of your holiness? Think of the many shortcomings, the endless sins, great and small, the numberless

yieldings to temptation, the constant infirmities of temper which have marked the course of your lives during the last year, and then set these off against the good deeds on which you congratulate yourselves, have you much to be proud of? Are you proud of your bodily strength, your health, your beauty? Remember that a sudden cold or the prick of a lancet will banish life from your bodies, that a week's sickness will mar your beauty for ever. The flowers which bloom and fade are more beautiful than the loveliest of living beings, hundreds of animals are stronger and more long-lived than man; have we then much to be proud of here? Are you proud of your intellect, of your superiority over your neighbours in knowledge and education? Brethren, the most deeply learned knows that he is as a child amid the mysteries of nature; half his knowledge is but a groping after more light, which is long in coming, and feeble when it is gained. "Our learning is best when it teaches most humility, but to be proud of learning is the greatest ignorance in the world." (*H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, M.A.*) **Justified rather than the other.**—*Justification*.—I. How do we become just with God? 1. Not by works in themselves, but by the disposition of the mind. 2. Not only by a moral disposition, but by a pious disposition. 3. Not only by a pious disposition in general, but by a believing disposition in the merits of Christ. Justification is God's gift, apart from any desert on our part. II. WHAT RICH BLESSING IS INCLUDED IN OUR JUSTIFICATION? 1. Forgiveness of sin. 2. An incentive and power to a new life in repentance and satisfaction. 3. Always free access now to God, and new assurances of favour and a sure hope of eternal life. (*Heintzeler.*) *Humility and self-reproach rewarded*.—I recently met with an account of a prince, the son of a king, who went to a house of correction to see the captives. Meeting there so many people, toiling at their tasks, and hobbling in their chains, his heart was moved with pity, and he resolved to give some of them their liberty. But he must first find out which of them deserved release. To satisfy himself on this point, he went from one to the other, asking each why he was there. According to the answers he got, all were brave, proper, and honourable men; one had simply been unfortunate; another had done no wrong; a third was slandered; a fourth was forced against his will; each pleading innocence, and entreating, on these grounds, to be released. At last he came to a young man, asking, "And what have you done, that has brought you here?" "Gracious sir," answered the man, "I am here because I deserve it. I ran away from my parents; I led an idle and dissolute life; I committed theft and forgery; and it would take an hour to tell all the bad things I have done. And this is what I justly deserve for my evil deeds." The prince facetiously remarked: "Indeed! and how does it happen that so bad a man ever found his way in among all these virtuous and honourable people? Take off his chains, open the gates, and let him out, lest he corrupt and spoil these good innocent men, who have all been put here without a cause." He meant to say, that this was the only honest-hearted one among them; that the rest had only lied and dissembled; and that people who have no sins to confess, are not fit to have their punishments remitted. "This young man," said he, "confesses his misdeeds; he has humbled himself before God and me; and him alone I deem worthy of his freedom. Therefore set him at liberty." (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*)

Ver. 16. Suffer little children to come unto Me.—Christ's favour to little children displayed.—1. These children were not brought to Christ to be taught, for they were not yet capable of receiving instruction; nor could they profit by His preaching, or put any questions to Him. Those who are grown up to years of understanding, have need to be busy in getting knowledge now, that they may redeem the time they lost, through the invincible incapacities of their infancy. 2. Nor were they brought to Christ to be cured, for it does not appear that they needed it. Little children are indeed liable to many distempers, painful, mortal ones. The physicians have a book among them, "*De Morbis Infantum*"—on the diseases of infants. Death and its harbingers reign even over them who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, but these children were strong and healthful, and we do not find that anything ailed them. 3. They were brought to Christ to be blessed; so they meant when they desired that He would touch them: the sign is put for the thing signified. I. How we must bring our little children to Christ. 1. By surrendering them to Him in Holy Baptism. 2. We must bring them to Christ, by seeking to Him for them, as those who are surrendered to Him. They are to be but once baptized, but they are to be daily prayed for, and the promise sealed to them in their baptism put in suit and pleaded with God in their behalf.

(1) Be constant in praying for your children; pray for them as duly as for yourselves, as St. Paul for his friends, making mention of them always in every prayer. (2) Be particular in praying for them; pray for each particular child, as holy Job offered burnt-offerings for his sons, according to the number of them all; that you may be able to say, as Hannah, "For this child I prayed": pray for particular blessings for your children, according as you see their case requires, for that grace which you observe their natural temper (or distemper rather) calls for. 3. We must bring them to Christ, by submitting them to the disposal of His Providence. I have read of a good man, whose son being disposed of in the world, met with great affliction, which he once very feelingly complained of to his good father, who answered (according to the principle I am now upon), "Anything, child, to bring thee to heaven." 4. We must bring them to Christ, by subjecting them, as far as we can, to the government of His grace. Having laid their necks under the yoke of Christ in their baptism, we must teach them to draw in it, and use our interest in them, and authority over them, to keep them under that easy yoke, and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of our Lord Jesus. II. **HOW CHRIST WILL RECEIVE THE CHILDREN.** 1. He took those children up in His arms; and so we may hope He will take up our children in the arms of His power and providence, and of His pity and grace. 2. He put His hands upon those children. (1) If He set us and ours apart for Himself, as His own peculiar people, we may say He puts His hand upon us and ours: as the buyer lays his hand on the goods he has agreed for, they are now his own; as Jacob put his hand on the head of Joseph's sons, to signify not only his blessing them, but his adopting them, and taking them for his own, "Let my name be named upon them." This we hope Christ does for our children, when we bring them to Him; He owns them for His; and we may say they do in some degree belong to Christ, are retainers to His family. (2) If He give His Holy Spirit to us and ours, it may truly be said, He puts His hand upon us and them. The Spirit is sometimes called the finger of God, and sometimes the hand of God, so that Christ's putting His hand upon us, not only puts us into a relation to Him, but works a real change in us; lays hold on the soul for Him, and puts His image, as well as superscription, upon it. The laying on of hands was a ceremony used in conferring the Holy Ghost; and this we pray for, and hope for, from Christ, for our children, when we bring them to Him. 3. He blessed them. He was desired to pray for a blessing for them, but He did more, He commanded the blessing, blessed with authority; He pronounced them blessed, and thereby made them so; for those whom He blesseth are blessed indeed. Christ is the great High Priest, whose office it is to bless the people of God, and all theirs. III. **THE APPLICATION.** 1. Let me hence address myself to children, to little children, to the lambs of the flock, to the youngest who can hear with understanding: will not you be glad to hear this, that the Lord Jesus Christ has a tender concern and affection for you; and that He has blessings in store for you, if you apply yourselves to Him, according to your capacity? Lay yourselves at Christ's feet, and He will take you up in His arms. Give yourselves to Him, and He will give Himself in His grace and comforts to you. Lie in His way, by a diligent attendance on His ordinances, and He will not pass by without putting His hand on you. And if you value His blessings aright, and be earnest with Him for His blessings, He will bless you with the best of blessings, such as will make you eternally blessed. (1) Let us then still bring them to Him, by faith and prayer, according as their case requires. (2) Let us bring them up for Him. Let not your children rest in a mere natural religion; that is good, it is necessary, but it is not enough. You must make them sensible of their need of Christ, of their lost and undone condition without Him; must endeavour to lead them into the mysteries of our reconciliation to God, and our redemption from sin and wrath, by a Mediator; and O that they may experimentally know Him, and the power of His resurrection! And as in other accomplishments of your children, so in the business of religion, which is their best and true accomplishment, you must, as they come to be capable, put them on to advance. 3. Let this encourage us, who are parents, concerning our children; and enable us to think of them with comfort and hope, in the midst of our cares about them. When we wish well to them, we would willingly hope well; and this is ground of hope, that our Lord Jesus has expressed so much favour to little children. (1) This may comfort and encourage the tender careful mothers in nursing them, that they are carrying those in their arms whom Christ has taken up in His. (2) This may comfort and encourage us if our children labour under any bodily weaknesses and infirmities, if they be unhealthful and often ailing, which is an allay to our comfort

in them; let this serve to balance that, If they belong to Christ, and be blessed of Him, they are blessed indeed; and nothing amiss of that kind shall be any prejudice to their blessedness, or diminution of it, but may, being sanctified, become rather a friend and furtherance to it. Many have been the wiser and better, the more humble and heavenly, for their having borne the yoke of affliction in their youth. (*Matthew Henry.*)

A mother's concern for her children:—I feel a sympathy with what a woman said to me. I was told to come to her dying couch, and administer the sacrament. I went with an elder. She said: "I want to belong to the Church. I am going up to be a member of the Church in heaven; but I don't want to go until I am a member of the Church on earth." So I gave her the sacrament. And then she said: "Now, I am in the Church, here is the baby, baptize him; and here are all the children, baptize them all. I want to leave them all in the Church." So I baptized them. Some years after, I was preaching one day in Chicago, and at the close of the service, a lad came upon the platform, and said: "You don't know me, do you?" "No," said I. "My name is George Parish." "Ah," said I; "I remember, I baptized you by your mother's dying bed, didn't I?" "Yes," he said: "You baptized all of us there, and I came up to tell you that I have given my heart to God. I thought you would like to know it." "I am very glad," I replied; "but I am not surprised. You had a good mother; that is almost sure to make a boy come to God if he has a good mother." (*De W. Talmage, D.D.*)

Christianity and the destiny of children:—When I was at Dhoas, writes a missionary's wife, my husband opened the new chapel, which holds one hundred and fifty people. Sixty-five persons were baptized; among the rest several women. I proposed meeting them alone on Tuesday evening. One very nice-looking woman had a sweet-looking girl at her side, about ten years old. I said, "Amah, would you like me to teach your daughter?" With an indescribable look of tenderness she drew her to her side, and putting her arm around her, said, "This is my only one." "Have you not had more children?" I asked. "Ah! yes, ma'am, I have had six; but they are dead. Yes, they all died, five of them, one after the other; they all died." "And you, poor thing, how sorry you must have been!" "Heigh-ho! how sorry! Too much trouble I took; too much expense. After the first died I took sacrifices to the temple, and made worship to the idol, and told him I would give him all I could if my second might live; but he died. Then my heart was very sore; and when my third came, I went to a guru, and took a cloth, and fowl, and rice; and he said muntrums, and made pujah (worship); but no, that child, he died. My heart was like fire, it burned so with sorrow. I was almost mad; and yet I tried some fresh ceremony for every child." "What did you think had become of the spirits of your children?" I asked. "You knew their bodies died, but did you think much of their spirits?" "Ah! that was the thing that almost made me mad. I did not know. I thought perhaps one devil took one, and another took another; or perhaps they were gone into some bird, or beast, or something, I did not know; and I used to think and think till my heart was too full of sorrow." "But, Amah," I replied, "you do not look sorry now." With a look almost sublime, she said, "Sorry now! Oh, no, no! Why, I know now where my children are. They are with Jesus. I have learned that Jesus said, 'Suffer little children to come unto Me.' My sorrow is all gone, and I can bear their not being with me. They are happy with Him, and, after a little while, I shall go to Him too, and this little girl, my Julia, and my husband too." (*A. C. Thomson, D.D.*)

Children the true saints of God:—Mr. Gray had not been long minister of the parish before he noticed the odd practice of the grave-digger; and one day when he came upon John smoothing and trimming the lonely bed of a child which had been buried a few days before, he asked why he was so particular in dressing and keeping the graves of infants. John paused for a moment at his work, and looking up, not at the minister, but at the sky, said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." "And on this account you tend and adorn them with so much care," remarked the minister, who was greatly struck with the reply. "Surely, sir," answered John; "I canna make ower braw and fine the bed-covering o' a little innocent sleeper that is waitin' there till it is God's time to wauken it and cover it with white robe, and waft it away to glory. Where sic grandeur is awaitin' it yonder, it's fit it should be decked oot here. I think the Saviour will like to see white clover spread abune it; dae ye no think sae tae, sir?" "But why not thus cover larger graves?" asked the minister, hardly able to suppress his emotions. "The dust of all His saints is precious in the Saviour's sight." "Very true, sir," responded John, with great solemnity, "but I canna be sure wha are His saints, and wha are no. I hope thear are many of them lyin' in this kirk-

yard; but it wad be great presumption to mark them oot. There are some that I'm gey sure aboot, and I keep their graves as nate and snod as I can, and plant a bit floure here and there as a sign of my hope, but daurna gie them the white shirt," referring to the white clover. "It's clean different, though, wi' the bairns." (*Ibid.*)

The blessed influence of children:—Children are the salvation of the race. They purify, they elevate, they stir, they instruct, they console, they reconcile, they gladden us. They are the ozone of human life, inspiring us with hope, rousing us to wholesome sacrifice. If, in the faults which they inherit, they show us the worst of ourselves, and so move us to a salutary repentance, they also stimulate our finer qualities; they cheat us of weary care; they preach to us, not so much by their lips as by their innocence; their questions set us thinking, and to better purpose than the syllogisms of philosophers; their helplessness makes us tender; their loveliness surprises us into pure joy. . . . A child is a sunbeam on a winter sea, a flower in a prison garden, the music of bells over the noise of a great city, a fragrant odour in a sick-room. If any one thinks this exaggerated, I am sorry for him. It is literally true for me, and for tens of thousands who have far more right to it. These fingers tingle with a kind of happiness while I am writing about them here. My chilly friend need not have my joy if he does not believe in it, or care for it; I will not force it on him, but he shall not take mine from me. (*Bishop of Rochester.*)

I. With respect to THE COMMAND in the text. Those persons may be said to fulfil it, in the first place, who afford to children a Christian example. Now, let us consider here, what features of character may be best exemplified, so as to produce a good effect. One peculiar trait in the character of our Lord Jesus Christ was His consideration of human infirmity. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." 2. Not only should our instructions be religious, but eminently evangelical, in order to benefit the young. In preaching, it is found that the preaching of mere morality, however luminous and explicit, and however judiciously and powerfully enforced, produces but very little effect. 3. Remember that all human instruction needs to be frequently repeated. Even adults, whose minds are not volatile as those of children, need "line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept, precept upon precept." 4. Allow me to call your attention, also, to another very important fact, namely, that without the influence of the Holy Spirit, no valuable effect can be produced. II. In the text there is an allusion, also, to the character of THE ENCOURAGEMENT we may derive from the communication of such instructions: "Of such is the kingdom of God." It might, indeed, be remarked here, that there is an admirable adaptation between what is taught, and the end you wish to produce—the means are exactly united to the end proposed. But—1. Consider how much good is produced by the influence of habit. Now, when you have to do with children, you have to do with those whose minds are susceptible; and you may be instrumental in forming their habits, and in putting them on their guard against the dangers to which they are exposed. 2. Many to whom we address ourselves on the concerns of their souls, complain of want of time and of the distracting influence of the things of the world. But when you take youthful minds into your hands, you have to do with those on whom worldly cares have no influence. 3. The things of the world produce, naturally, a kind of indurating influence. It tends to sink them down to that very situation in which the soul naturally wishes to be. And not only is there in the minds of children a tenderness of feeling for the reception of these great and important truths, but also a freshness and vigour for the exhibition of these truths, and for the exhibition of them to the greatest advantage. (*R. Treffry.*) *Why children should come to Jesus*:—I. THE CHILDREN OF TO-DAY SHOULD COME TO JESUS BECAUSE THEY NEED JUST SUCH A TEACHER, SAVIOUR, AND FRIEND. I remember a company of blind children from an asylum waiting at the door of one of our churches for some one from within to lead them to their place. Parents and teachers can lead a child to the door of a good life, but Jesus only can lead into goodness and heaven. II. ANOTHER REASON WHY CHILDREN, AND LITTLE CHILDREN, SHOULD COME TO JESUS IS, THAT THEY ARE NOT SO FAR FROM HIM AS THOSE WHO HAVE GROWN OLD IN SIN. Every child is born close to heaven's gate. Children's hearts have fresh affections that turn to Jesus almost as readily as climbing plants in June wind about their proper support. If those plants lie along the ground till August they can hardly be made to climb at all so late in their life. III. ANOTHER REASON FOR CHILDREN COMING TO JESUS IS HIS SPECIAL LOVE FOR THEM. (*W. C. C. Wright.*) *Children taken to Christ*:—Jesus is still calling little children to Him. His arms are ever open to receive them, and His lips parted to

bless them. He loves them for their likeness to His own purity and gentleness. He would keep them gentle and pure, that He may present them perfect to His own Father. Let us beware of throwing any impediment between them and their Saviour; of suffering our indifference or neglect, our flimsy theories, hard doctrines, or evil examples, to prevent these little ones from seeing and loving the Son of Mary; from being folded in the arms of His grace, and being blessed by the influences of His religion and life. I. LET US NOT FORBID THEIR COMING TO HIM IN THE RITE OF BAPTISM. If this is one of the calls which Jesus makes to little children; if He says to them, by a fair interpretation of the language of this rite, "Come to Me through the consecrated waters," let us suffer them to go, and not stand in their way with our doubts, our fears, or our apathy. Let that heavenly dew be shed on the opening buds, and shed early. Say not that they are without stain, and therefore need not the purifying wave. Jesus Himself, who in a still higher sense was stainless, Jesus Himself was baptized. Say not that they do not know in what office they are participating. You know it, and feel it; and if they know it not now, they will know hereafter. If you will but reflect that it is the bringing of little children openly to Jesus, placing them in His arms, and yielding them to His blessing, you will have learned the whole reason, nature, and plan of the ordinance at once, because your heart has been your teacher. And you will gladly suffer little children to go in this way to their Friend, and never think of forbidding them. II. SUFFER THEM TO GO TO HIM, secondly, BY ALL THE MEANS OF A TRULY CHRISTIAN EDUCATION. Continue the intimacy which was commenced at the font. Make them acquainted with every expression of His countenance, with every grace and sweetness of His character. We forbid their going to Christ, if in any way we make them, or help them to make themselves proud, vain, revengeful, cunning, or selfish. We lead them to Christ by teaching them to know and love Him entirely, to feel the whole divinity of His lowly yet lofty virtues, to appreciate thoroughly and justly the glory of His humility, the dignity of His meekness, the heroism of His long-suffering, the harmonious perfection of His character, with which everything worldly is in necessary discord. III. WE CAN HARDLY TEACH THEM THIS, UNLESS WE FEEL IT OURSELVES. Let us lead them, then, to Jesus, by the hand of our own example. Let us be especially cautious that our own selfish interests, bad passions, blind excesses are not placed in their way, to be stumbling-blocks to their tender feet. IV. LASTLY, IT MAY BE THAT OUR CHILDREN MUST DEPART BEFORE US ON THE UNKNOWN JOURNEY, AND WITHOUT US. We must suffer them to go to the arms of Jesus in the world of spirits. It is hard to part with them—but by the effort of an humble resignation, we must suffer them to go. It may be that the Saviour hath need of them. We may know that there also He will love them, and watch over them, and lead them; and that His love, presence, and guidance are better for them than ours. (*F. W. P. Greenwood, D.D.*) *My fruit-tree*:—I had a comely fruit-tree in the summer season, with the branches of it promising plenteous fruit; the stock was surrounded with seven or eight little shoots of different sizes, that grew up from the root at a small distance, and seemed to compose a beautiful defence and ornament for the mother tree; but the gardener, who espied their growth, knew the danger; he cut down those tender suckers one after another, and laid them in the dust. I pitied them in my heart, and said, "How pretty were these young standards! How much like the parent! How elegantly clothed with the raiment of summer! And each of them might have grown to a fruitful tree." But they stood so near as to endanger the stock; they drew away the sap, the heart and strength of it, so far as to injure the fruit, and darken the hopeful prospects of autumn. The pruning-knife appeared unkind indeed, but the gardener was wise; for the tree flourished more sensibly, the fruit quickly grew fair and large, and the ingathering at last was plenteous and joyful. Will you give me leave, Velina, to persuade you into this parable? Shall I compare you to this tree in the garden of God? You have had many of these young suckers springing up around you; they stood awhile your sweet ornaments and your joy, and each of them might have grown up to a perfection of likeness, and each might have become a parent-tree: but say, Did they never draw your heart from God? Did you never feel them stealing any of those seasons of devotion, or those warm affections that were first and supremely due to Him that made you? Did they not stand a little too near the soul? And when they had been cut off successively, and laid one after another in the dust, have you not found your heart running out more towards God, and living more perpetually upon Him? Are you not now devoting yourself more entirely to God every day, since the last was taken away? Are you

not aiming at some greater fruitfulness and service than in times past? If so, then repine not at the pruning-knife; but adore the conduct of the heavenly Husbandman, and say, "All His ways are wisdom and mercy." But I have not yet done with my parable. When the granary was well stored with excellent fruit, and before winter came upon the tree, the gardener took it up by the roots, and it appeared as dead. But his design was not to destroy it utterly; for he removed it far away from the spot of earth where it had stood, and planted it in a hill of richer mould, which was sufficient to nourish it with all its attendants. The spring appeared, the tree budded into life again, and all those fair little standards that had been cut off, broke out of the ground afresh, and stood up around it (a sweet young grove) flourishing in beauty and immortal vigour. You know not where you are, Velina, and that I have carried you to the hill of paradise, to the blessed hour of the resurrection. What an unknown joy it will be, when you have fulfilled all the fruits of righteousness in this lower world, to be transplanted to that heavenly mountain! What a Divine rapture and surprise of blessedness, to see all your little offspring about you at that day, springing out of the dust at once, making a fairer and brighter appearance in that upper garden of God, and rejoicing together (a sweet company), all partakers with you of the same happy immortality; all fitted to bear heavenly fruit, without the need or danger of a pruning-knife. Look forward, by faith, to that glorious morning, and admire the whole scheme of providence and grace. Give cheerful honours beforehand to your Almighty and All-wise Governor, who by His unsearchable counsels has fulfilled your best wishes, and secured your dear infants to you for ever, though not just in your own way; that blessed hand which made the painful separation on earth shall join you and your babes together in His own heavenly habitation, never to be divided again, though the method may be painful to flesh and blood. Fathers shall not hope in vain, nor "mothers bring forth for trouble: they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them" (Isa. lxx. 23). Then shall you say, "Lord, here am I, and the children that Thou hast given me." For He is your God, and the God of your seed in an everlasting covenant. Amen. (*Written by Dr. Watts to a lady on the death of several young children.*)

Run to Jesus:—An affectionate mother, when reading this passage with her little girl, said, "I would have led you forward to Jesus." "You would not have needed," replied the child, "I would have run."

Ver. 17. Receive the kingdom of God as a little child.—*Receiving the kingdom of God as a little child:*—I. To begin with, let me deal with THE SECRET THOUGHT OF THE DISCIPLES, expressed by their actions though not spoken in words. 1. And, first, it is pretty clear that the disciples thought the children were too insignificant for the Lord's time to be taken up by them. 2. Again, I suppose that these grown-up apostles thought that the children's minds were too trifling. Despise not children for trifling when the whole world is given to folly. 3. "Ay," say they, "but if we should let the children come to Christ, and if He should bless them, they will soon forget it. No matter how loving His look and how spiritual His words, they will go back to their play, and their weak memories will preserve no trace of it at all." This objection we meet in the same manner as the others. Do not men forget? 4. Perhaps, too, they thought that children had not sufficient capacity. 5. To put the thought of the apostle into one or two words: they thought that the children must not come to Christ because they were not like themselves—they were not men and women. The child must not come to the Master because he is not like the man. How the blessed Saviour turns the tables and says, "Say, not, the child may not come till he is like a man, but know that you cannot come till you are like him. It is no difficulty in the child's way that he is not like you; the difficulty is with you, that you are not like the child." Instead of the child needing to wait until he grows up and becomes a man, it is the man who must grow down and become like a child. II. Now we pass to our second head, namely, THE OPEN DECLARATION OF OUR LORD, wherein He sets forth His mind upon this matter, 1. Looking at it carefully, we observe, first, that He tells the disciples that the gospel sets up a kingdom. Was there ever a kingdom which had no children in it? How then could it grow? 2. Next, our Lord tells us that the way of entering the kingdom is by receiving. "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein." We do not enter into the kingdom of God by working out some deep problem and arriving at its solution; not by fetching something out of ourselves, but by receiving a secret something into us. We come into the kingdom by the kingdom's coming into us: it receives us by our receiving it. Now, if this

entrance into the kingdom depended upon something to be fetched out of the human mind by study and deep thought, then very few children could ever enter it; but it depends upon something to be received, and therefore children may enter. 3. The next thing in the text is that if we receive this kingdom, and so enter into it, we must receive it as children receive it. III. THE GREAT ENCOURAGEMENT given by our Lord in the text. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Vers. 18-30. Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?—*The rich youth's address to Christ*.—I. THE FAVOURABLE TRAITS OF CHARACTER EXHIBITED IN THE QUESTION PROPOSED BY THIS YOUNG MAN. 1. The question itself was of supreme importance. 2. The question was a personal one. 3. The question was put at an interesting period of life. 4. The question was put by one who possessed an abundance of riches. 5. The question was put with feelings of great modesty and respect. 6. The question was put with great sincerity and earnestness of spirit. II. THE DEFECTS WHICH WERE ELICITED BY THE SAVIOUR. 1. He evidently expected salvation by the works of the law. 2. He was held in bondage by one reigning idol. 3. He was unwilling to yield to the extensive requirements of the Saviour. III. THE LESSONS WHICH HIS HISTORY FURNISHES. 1. The exceeding deceitfulness of earthly riches. 2. That we may go far in religious practices, and yet not be saved. 3. We are in great danger from spiritual deception. 4. Religion requires a total surrender of ourselves to God. (J. Burns, D.D.) Thou knowest the commandments.—*Keep the commandments*.—I. INQUIRE INTO THE DESIGN WITH WHICH OUR SAVIOUR SPOKE THESE WORDS. His aim was to expose ignorance, self-righteousness, and insincerity, in one whom the spectators were doubtless admiring for his apparent devotion. 1. The man was ignorant of Christ's real character. 2. He expected life as the reward of his own merit. 3. He was not sincerely willing to sacrifice anything for the kingdom of heaven's sake. II. ENDEAVOUR TO PROMOTE A SIMILAR DESIGN BY A FAITHFUL APPLICATION OF THEM TO OURSELVES. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." These words, duly considered, may—1. Convince us of sin. There is no doubt, that we ought to keep the commandments. But, have we done so? 2. Drive us to Christ as a Refuge. 3. Guide the steps of the justified believer. The curse of the law it at an end—not its obligation. (J. Jowett, M.A.) Yet lackest thou one thing.—*One weak spot*.—When Jesus tells us that we cannot be His disciples so long as we lack one thing, does He mean that we must have supplied every moral defect, must have attained every grace, must have vanquished every spiritual enemy, and, in fact, have ceased to sin, before we can be His disciples? That would be simply saying that none of us can hope to be a Christian unless he is morally perfect; and that of course involves the converse, that every true Christian is thus morally perfect. The shock this statement gives to our common sense, and its manifest contradiction of the whole drift of the New Testament, at once drives us from any such interpretation. We find a consistent meaning, I suppose, if we understand Him as declaring that no heart is really Christianized, or converted, so long as there is any one conscious, deliberate, or intentional reservation from entire obedience to the Divine will. So that if I say, Here is one particular sin which I must continue to practise; all the rest of my conduct I freely conform to God's law, but this known wrong I must continue to do—then I am no Christian. If you single out some one chosen indulgence, however secret—a dubious custom in business, a fault of the tongue or temper—and, placing your hand over that, reply to the all-searching commandment of the Most High, "This I cannot let go; this is too sweet to me, or too profitable to me, or too tightly interwoven with my constitutional predilections, or too hard to be put off"—then the quality of a disciple is not in you. There is a portion of your being which you do not mean, or try, to consecrate to heaven. And that single persistent offence vitiates the whole character. It keeps you, as a man, as a whole man, on the self-side or world-side, and away from Christ's side. For it not only shuts off righteousness from one district of your nature, and so abridges the quantity of your life, but it inflicts the much more radical damage of denying the supremacy of the law of righteousness, and thus corrupts the quality. It practically rejects the heavenly rule when that rule crosses the private inclination. And that is the essence of rebellion. (Bishop F. D. Huntington.) The test-point.—When Jesus spoke thus of one thing fatally lacking to the Jewish ruler, He spoke to us all. But with this difference: that one subtle passion which spoils the whole character for us may not be his passion. With him it seems to have been avarice; he could not bear to turn his private property into public charity. His religion broke down just there: in other

respects he had done admirably; he had kept other commandments to the letter—aye, to the letter; not perhaps in the spirit, for all true obedience has one spirit. But so far his literal, formal obedience came, and there gave out. But then you may happen to be so constituted that such an abandonment of wealth would be a very small sacrifice—one of the least that could be required of you; you are not naturally sordid; you are more inclined to be prodigal; and so this would not be a test-point with you. But there is a test-point about you somewhere. Perhaps it is pride; you cannot bear an affront; you will not confess a fault. Perhaps it is personal vanity, ready to sacrifice everything to display. Perhaps it is a sharp tongue. Perhaps it is some sensual appetite, bent on its unclean gratification. Then you are to gather up your moral forces just here, and till that darling sin is brought under the practical law of Christ, you are shut out from Christ's kingdom. I have no right to love anything so well that I cannot give it up for God. God knows where the trial must be applied. And we are to know that wherever it is applied, there is the one thing lacking, unless we can say "Thy will be done," and bear it. The gospel does not propose itself as an easy system—easy in the sense of excusing from duty. Were we not right then, in the ground taken at the outset, that the power of Christianity over the character is proved by the thoroughness of its action rather than by the extent of surface over which its action spreads? It displays its heavenly energy in dislodging the one cherished sin, in breaking down the one entrenched fortress that disputes its way. At the battle of Borodino, Napoleon saw that there was no such thing as victory till he had carried the great central redoubt on the Russian line. Two hundred guns and the choicest of his battalions were poured against that single point, and when the plumes of his veterans gleamed through the smoke on the highest embrasures of that volcano of shot, he knew the field was won. It matters very little that we do a great many things morally irreproachable, so long as there is one ugly disposition that hangs obstinately back. It is only when we come to a point of real resistance that we know the victory of faith overcoming the world. Finally, our renewing and redeeming religion delights to reach down to the roots of the sin that curses us, and spread its healing efficacy there. It yearns to yield us the fulness of its blessing; and this it knows it cannot do till it brings the heart under the completeness of its gentle captivity to Christ. Submission first; then peace, and joy, and love. "Jesus beholding him, loved him"; yet sent him away sorrowing. How tender, and yet how true! tender in the sad affection—true to the stern unbending sacrifice of the Cross! It is because He would have us completely happy that He requires a complete submission. "One thing" must not be left lacking. Whosoever would enter into the full strength and joy of a disciple must throw his whole heart upon the altar. (*Ibid.*)

How hardly shall they that have riches enter.—*The danger of riches* :—Rather, if one asked, What peril have riches? one might ask, What peril have they not? First, then, they are wholly contrary to the life of Christ and His passion. That cannot be the safe, the happy lot, which is in all things most opposite to His. Unlike Him, we must ever here be; for we are sinners, He alone, as man, was holy; we are His creatures, He our God. But can it be safe not to be aiming, herein also, to be less unlike? Can it be safe to choose that which in all its pomp and glory was brought before His eye as man, to be wholly rejected by Him; to choose what He rejected, and shrink back from what He chose? This, then, is the first all-containing peril of riches. They are, in themselves, contrary to the Cross of Christ. I speak not now of what they may be made. As we, being enemies, were, through the Cross, made friends, so may all things, evil and perilous in themselves, except sin, become our friends. The Cross finds us in desolation, and they, He says, "have received their consolation"; it finds us in evil things, and they are surrounded by their good things; it comes in want, and they have abundance; in distress, and they are at ease; in sorrow, and they are ever tempted even to deaden their sorrows in this world's miserable joys. Happy only in this, that He who chasteneth whom He loveth, sprinkles His own healthful bitterness over life's destructive sweetness, and by the very void and emptiness of vanity calls forth the unsatisfied soul no more to "spend money on that which is not bread, or its labour on that which satisfieth not." But if it be so hard for the rich to seek to bear the cross, it must be hard for them truly to love Him who bore it. Love longeth to liken itself to that it loves. It is an awful question, my brethren; but how can we love our Lord if we suffer not with Him? 2. Then it is another exceeding peril of riches and ease that they may tend to make us forget that here is not our home. Men on a journey through a stranger's, much more

an enemy's, land linger not. Their hearts are in their home; thither are their eyes set; they love the winds which have blown over it; they love the very hills which look upon it, even while they hide it; days, hours, and minutes pass quickly or slowly as they seem to bring them near to it; distance, time, weariness, strength, all are counted only with a view to this, "are they nearer to the faces they love? can they, when shall they reach it?" What then, my brethren, if our eyes are not set upon the everlasting "hills, whence cometh our help?" what if we cherish not those inward breathings which come to us from our heavenly home, hushing, refreshing, restoring, lifting up our hearts, and bidding us flee away and be at rest? What if we are wholly satisfied, and intent on things present? can we be longing for the face of God? or can we love Him whom we long not for? or do we long for Him, if we say not daily, "When shall I come and appear before the presence of God?" 3. Truly there is not one part of the Christian character which riches, in themselves, do not tend to impair. Our Lord placed at the head of evangelic blessings, poverty of spirit, and, as a help to it and image of it, the outward body of the soul of true poverty, poverty of substance too. The only "riches" spoken of in the New Testament, except as a woe, are the unsearchable riches of the glory and grace of Christ, the riches of the goodness of God, the depth of the riches of His wisdom, or the riches of liberality, whereto deep poverty abounded. 4. Poverty is, at least, a fostering nurse of humility, meekness, patience, trust in God, simplicity, sympathy with the sufferings of our Lord or of its fellow (for it knows the heart of those who suffer). What when riches, in themselves, hinder the very grace of mercifulness which seems their especial grace, of which they are the very means? What wonder that they cherish that brood of snakes, pride, arrogance, self-pleasing, self-indulgence, self-satisfaction, trust in self, forgetfulness of God, sensuality, luxury, spiritual sloth, when they deaden the heart to the very sorrows they should relieve? And yet it is difficult, unless, through self-discipline, we feel some suffering, to sympathize with those who suffer. Fulness of bread deadens love. As a rule, the poor show more mercy to the poor out of their poverty, than the rich out of their abundance. But if it be a peril to *have* riches, much more is it to *seek* them. To have them is a trial allotted to any of us by God; to seek them is our own. Through trials which He has given us He will guide us; but where has He promised to help us in what we bring upon ourselves? In all this I have not spoken of any grosser sins to which the love of money gives birth; of what all fair men would condemn, yet which, in some shape or other, so many practise. Such are, hardness to the poor or to dependents; using a brother's services for almost nought, in order to have more to spend in luxury; petty or more grievous frauds; falsehood, hard dealing, taking advantage one of another, speaking evil of one another, envying one another, forgetting natural affection. And yet in this Christian land many of these are very common. Holy Scripture warns us all not to think ourselves out of danger of them. (*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*) *The deceitfulness of riches*:—Notice the deceitfulness of all kinds of riches. Riches may corrupt the very simplest of you. Take care. How many men have received hold of the gallows and hanged themselves just through the deceitfulness of riches. We could trace the history of many a man, and see how he died in the bank, that great mortuary. The man began simply, and was a right genial soul. He brought with him morning light and fresh air wherever he came; and as for cases of poverty, his hand knew the way to his pocket so well that he could find that pocket in the dark. As for religious services, he was there before the door was opened. He never thought the Sabbath day too long. He loved the sanctuary, and was impatient until the gates were opened unto him. He even went to the week-evening services. But then he was only a working man, and only working men should go out into the night air! What does it matter about a few working men being killed by the east wind? The man whose course we are tracing doubled his income and multiplied it by five, and then doubled it again, and then found that he must give up the prayer-meeting. Certainly. Then he proceeded to double his income, and then he gave up the Sunday evening service. There was a draught near where he sat, or there was some person in the third pew from his the appearance of whom he could not bear. How dainty my lord is becoming! Oh, what a nostril he has for evil savour! He will leave presently altogether. He will not abruptly leave, but he will simply not come back again, which really means practically the same thing. He will attend in the morning, and congratulate the poor miserable preacher on the profit of the service. Did he mean to do this when he began to get a little wealthier? Not he. Is he the same

man he used to be! No. Is he nearer Christ? He is a million universes away from Christ. He is killed by wealth. He trusted in it, misunderstood, misapplied it. It is not wealth that has ruined him, but his misconception of the possible uses of wealth. He might have been the leader of the Church. There was a lady, whose husband's personalty was sworn at millions, who was unable to attend one of the ladies' meetings organized for the purpose of making garments for the poor, and she said that she could no longer attend, and therefore her subscription would lapse. Let it lapse. If it were a case in connection with this Church I would not have named it. It is because distance of space and time enable me to refer to it without identification that I point the moral, and say that where such wealth is, or such use of wealth, there is rottenness of soul. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *You cannot take your riches with you into the kingdom if you are going to trust in them:—*If you are going to offer them to Christ and sanctify them to His use, let us know of it. You cannot bring your intellectual pride with you. If you are going to consecrate your intellect to the study of the profoundest mysteries, if you are going to cultivate the child-like spirit—for the greater the genius the greater the modesty—bring it all! You can bring with you nothing of the nature of patronage to Christ. It is because He has so little, He has so much; because He is so weak, He is so strong. You cannot compliment Him: He lies beyond the range of eulogy. We reach Him by His own way—sacrifice, self-immolation, transformation. A great mystery, outside of words and all their crafty uses, but a blessed, conscious, spiritual experience. Blessed are those to whom that experience is a reality. (*Ibid.*) Who, then, can be saved?—*Who, then, can be saved?*—The difficulties of salvation, however, do not arise from the want of power in God, for nothing is too hard for Him; He can as easily save a world as He could at first create one. Nor does it arise from any want of sufficiency in Christ, for "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him"; yes, to the uttermost of our desires and necessities, and in the last extremity. The difficulties therefore arise from the nature of salvation itself, and our sinful aversion to it. I. LET US NOTICE MORE PARTICULARLY SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAY OF OUR SALVATION. 1. The truths to be believed are some of them very mysterious, and, as Peter says, "Hard to be understood." 2. The sacrifices to be made are also in some degree painful. That which cost our Saviour so much must surely cost us something. 3. The dispositions to be exercised are such as are contrary to the natural bias of our depraved hearts. 4. The duties to be performed. Is there no difficulty more especially in renouncing a customary or constitutional evil, and keeping ourselves from our own iniquity? 5. The trouble and danger to which religion exposes its professors. II. ATTEMPT TO ANSWER THE INQUIRY IN OUR TEXT, "Who, then, can be saved?" If men were left to themselves, either in a natural or renewed state, and if God were not to work, or to withhold His hand after He had begun to work, none would be saved, no, not one. 1. Such shall be saved as are appointed to it. Of some it is said, "God hath chosen them to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." 2. Those shall be saved who are truly desirous of it. 3. Those who come to Christ for salvation shall be sure to obtain it. 4. Such as endure to the end shall be saved. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) Lo, we have left all and followed Thee.—*The happiness of self-denial:—*I. SELF-DENIAL IS TO BE EXPLAINED. 1. In the first place, it does not consist in giving up one temporal and personal good for a greater temporal and personal good. For this is self-gratifying instead of self-denying. Any entirely selfish person would be willing to do this. One man will sacrifice his property to gratify his ambition, which he esteems a greater good. Another man will sacrifice his property to gratify his appetite, which he esteems a greater good. Another will sacrifice his property to gratify his revenge, which he esteems a greater good. But none of these persons, in these cases, exercise the least self-denial. 2. Nor, secondly, does self-denial consist in giving up a less temporal and personal good for a greater personal and eternal good. The most corrupt and selfish men in the world are willing to give up any or all their temporal and personal interests for the sake of obtaining future and eternal happiness. 3. But, thirdly and positively, self-denial consists in giving up our own good for the good of others. Such self-denial stands in direct contrariety to selfishness. II. TRUE SELF-DENIAL IS PRODUCTIVE OF THE HIGHEST PRESENT AND FUTURE HAPPINESS. This will appear if we consider—1. The nature of true self-denial. It consists, as we have seen, in giving up a less private or personal good for a greater public good; or in giving up our own good

for the greater good of others. And this necessarily implies disinterested benevolence, which is placing our own happiness in the greater happiness of others. When a man gives up his own happiness to promote the greater happiness of another, he does it freely and voluntarily, because he takes more pleasure in the greater good of another than in a less good of his own. 2. Those who have denied themselves the most have found the greatest happiness resulting from their self-denial. 3. The great and precious promises which are expressly made to self-denial by Christ Himself. Conclusion: 1. It appears, then, that self-denial is necessarily a term or condition of salvation. 2. It appears, also, that the doctrine cannot be carried too far. 3. If Christianity requires men to exercise true self-denial, then the Christian religion is not a gloomy, but a joyful, religion. It affords a hundredfold more happiness than any other religion can afford. 4. It appears from the nature of that self-denial which the gospel requires that the more sinners become acquainted with the gospel, the more they are disposed to hate it and reject it. All sinners are lovers of their own selves, and regard their own good supremely and solely, and the good of others only so far as it tends to promote their own private, personal, and selfish good. 5. It appears from the nature of that self-denial which the gospel requires why sinners are more willing to embrace any false scheme of religion than the true. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*)

Christian discipleship.—I. TO BE THE FOLLOWERS OF THE SAVIOUR, IS TO SUSTAIN A CHARACTER OF HIGH AND ESSENTIAL IMPORTANCE. 1. We cannot hold this relationship to the Son of God without believing the testimony given concerning Him, in the Scriptures. 2. Believing in Christ, we must be excited to a practical obedience to His commands, and an imitation of the excellences displayed as an example to man. 3. That same principle of faith will excite also to public profession of the Saviour's name, and active exertion in His cause. 4. Combine in your own characters the principles and the conduct to which we have now adverted. Believe on the Son of God; give an obedience to His perceptive will, and imitate the excellences He displayed; profess publicly that you will be His, and be active and zealous in the promotion of His designs; and then will you indeed and honourably be among those who "follow Him."

II. THAT IN SUSTAINING THIS CHARACTER, PAINFUL SACRIFICES MUST OFTEN BE MADE. Sacrifices for the name's sake of the Son of God are justified and called for, by reasons which might be expanded in very extensive illustration. Remember for whom they are made. For whom? For Him who built the fabric of the universe, and over whose wondrous creation the "morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." For whom? For Him who is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person," in whom "dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." For whom? For Him who "was rich, but for your sakes became poor," &c. Remember for what these sacrifices are made. They are made for the enjoyment of peace of conscience. They are made for a restoration to the image and the friendship of God. They are made for the refinement and ennobling of the nature. It is to be observed again—III. THAT PRESENT SACRIFICES IN THE CAUSE, AND AS THE FOLLOWERS OF THE SAVIOUR, ARE TO ISSUE IN A GLORIOUS REWARD. 1. The Saviour promises advantage to be possessed in the present life. In following Christ, we are blessed with repose of conscience; we are exalted to fellowship with God; we are endowed with capacities for improving in the knowledge of mysteries, identified with the highest welfare of our being; we become the companions of the excellent of the earth, and the innumerable company of angels; we are urged to a rapid increase in the graces which dignify the character, and are a pledge of the sublimity of the final destiny; we are supplied with strong consolation for sorrow, and firm support for death; and prospects are opened which stretch away to the immensities of immortality. Are not these "a hundredfold"? Here is the "pearl of great price": and well may we resolve to be as the merchant, and "sell" or "forsake" all we have, and buy it! 2. The Saviour promises advantage to be possessed in the life to come. It is a wise regulation in the decisions of Providence, that our chief reward is reserved for another state of existence. The Almighty intends that, in this world, our lives shall be those of trial; and that the stability of our graces should be proved, by the rigid and sometimes painful discipline to which we are exposed. (*J. Parsons.*)

Christian relationships.—Homes, parents, brethren, wives, children, are things to be desired, because they call forth the highest and purest affections, the exercise of which sheds abroad in the heart the highest and sweetest human joy and satisfaction. Now a man's conversion to the faith of Christ, though it at times, perhaps almost always,

estranged him from a heathen home and family, gave him another home, and a far wider family, attached to him in far firmer and closer, and withal more holy bonds, and these were brethren and sisters, fathers and mothers in Christ. The exercise of purified love and affection, and, we may add, reverence towards these, would diffuse through his heart a far holier and deeper joy than he had ever experienced in his former unholy heathen state. Take, for instance, the last chapter of the Epistle to the Romans; look at the number of Christians to whom the apostle sent salutation. In no one case were these salutations a mere heartless form. In every case they were accompanied by the overflow of Christian love, by memories of how they had laboured and suffered together in the same holy cause: in most cases, perhaps, they were the greetings of a father to his children in the faith. What a sea of satisfaction and holy joy does all this disclose! And so it was, though, of course, in different degrees, and under various forms, with every Christian who had given up any worldly advantage for Christ's sake. (*M. F. Sadler.*)

Vers. 31-34. Behold we go up to Jerusalem.—*The entrance into the Passion season:—I. WE GAZE AT THE LORD, AND INQUIRE HOW HE ENTERED THE SEASON OF PASSION.* 1. Not unprepared, but with a full, clear consciousness—(1) not only of His sufferings in general, but also in all their particulars; and (2) of the relation between His sufferings and the Divine Word and will. 2. His consciousness afforded Him the peace, courage, and decision to endure the sufferings willingly and patiently. *II. WE GAZE AT OURSELVES, AND INQUIRE HOW WE SHOULD ENTER THIS SEASON OF THE CHURCH YEAR.* 1. Not like the world, whose custom is to celebrate it with all kinds of amusement and folly; but, as the followers of Christ, let us get ready to accompany the Lord in His season of suffering. 2. Yet not like the twelve, of whom we read that they understood none of these things. We must know why and for whom the Lord suffered and died. 3. The blind man of Jericho is a good example to show how we should enter in with the Lord as He approaches His sufferings. (1) He appeals again and again for mercy. (2) He concentrates all his desires into one plea—that he might see. And the Lord opens his eyes. (*Schaffer.*) *A study for a doctrine of the atonement:—I shall proceed, accordingly, to indicate some personal ways in which it seems to me we may learn to enter, in some degree, into Jesus' consciousness that He must needs suffer.* Yet only in some degree, and in no full measure, can we hope to comprehend in our human experience the mind that was in Jesus. The open and most natural way of thought for us to take, in our desire to understand this most sacred truth, seems to me to be in general as follows: Study what forgiveness of injuries involves to the most Christian man or woman, learn what forgiveness of wrong may cost the most Christlike heart, and from such knowledge gain the means of understanding why the Christ from God must needs suffer on the Cross. If we have not been compelled by some bitter experience of our own to learn the moral necessities of suffering in forgiving sin, let us search with reverent sympathies the depth of the trouble into which others have been plunged by some erring one to whom they were bound by vital ties; learn how father, mother, wife, must needs suffer in the continued charity, and shielding love, and ever open forgiveness of the home towards one who has gone forth from it, unworthy of it, and been lost in the world. Such in general is the vital method, the personal way, in which we may study the doctrine of the atonement of Christ for the sin of the world. Let me briefly indicate several more definite truths which we may find in such study of the Cross. First, In our experience of forgiveness, and its moral necessities, we find that there must be penitence or confession on the part of the person who has done wrong. The sense of justice and right which demands confession of wrong and restitution is as human and as Divine as the love which would forgive an offence, and accept another's willingness to make restitution. Secondly, Human forgiveness involves a painful knowledge of the wrong which has been inflicted. Forgiveness is always born of suffering. You surely cannot forgive a friend if you have never known and felt the hurt of his unkindness. Some suffering for the injury received is an indispensable condition, or antecedent, of the exercise of forgiveness. Thirdly, We approach now another element in the history of human forgiveness, which is of deep moral significance; viz., the suffering of the injured person must be so discovered to the wrong-doer that he can know it, and have some appreciation of it, in order that forgiveness may be granted and received, and its perfect work accomplished. But you will ask, Is it not the glory of the forgiving spirit to hide its

sense of hurt? And the human forgiveness is never more than a polite fiction, if there is not in the hour of reconciliation this frank declaration and acknowledgment of the wrong done, and the suffering received from it. One thing in it seems to me clear as conscience. That wronged man cannot forgive his repentant enemy by treating his sin as though it had been nothing, by making light of it as though it had not cost him days of trouble, by hiding it in his good nature as though it were not an evil thing. Somehow that sense of injustice in his soul must find vent and burn itself out. Somehow that sense of wrong must manifest itself, and in some pure revelation of itself pass away. It cannot pass forever away except through revelation, as the fire expires through the flame. Yet in forgiveness justice must be a self-revealing flame, and not a consuming fire. Something like this has been the process of all genuine human reconciliations which I have observed. As an essential element of the reconciliation there was some revelation of pure justice. There was no hiding of the wrong. On either side there was no belittling the injury. There was no trifling with it as though a sin were nothing. It was no thoughtless forgiveness out of mere good nature, in which the heart's deeper sense of righteousness was not satisfied. I have left myself time only to point to the way by which we may ascend from this our human experience of forgiveness to the Cross of Christ, and the necessity for it in the love of God. It is a part of the penalty of sin that in every human transgression some just one must needs suffer with the guilty. This is a natural necessity of our human, or organic, relationship. And because we are so bound up together in good and in evil, we can bear one another's burdens, suffer helpfully for another, and to a certain extent save one another from the evil of the world. Now, according to these Gospels, God in Christ puts himself into this human relationship, and, as one with man, bears his burden and suffers under the sin of the world. The Father of spirits in His own eternal blessedness may not suffer with men; but in Christ God has humbled Himself to our consciousness of sin and death. In Christ the eternal love comes under the moral law of suffering, under which forgiveness may work its perfect work. More particularly, in the life and death of Christ these several elements which we have found belonging essentially to our experience of reconciliation with one another, have full exercise and scope. For Christ, identifying Himself with our sinful consciousness, makes a perfect repentance for sin and confession of it unto the Father. Christ experiences our sin as sinful, and confesses it. And again, Christ realizes the cost of the sin of the world. His loneliness of spirit, the cruel misunderstandings of Him by all men, His Gethsemane, His Cross—all realize the cost and suffering of sin, and in view of such sufferings of the Son of Man sin never can be regarded as a light and trifling thing. And still further, Christ reveals to the world what its sin has cost, and enables man who would be forgiven to appreciate it, and to acknowledge it. (*N. Smyth, D.D.*) They understood none of these things. *Misunderstanding Christ*:—The disciples' failure to understand the Master suggests an always timely question for the followers of Jesus: What misunderstandings of Christ may still be lingering in Christianity? The question is the more pertinent and the more necessary because one reason for the disciples' failure to perceive the things that were said by Jesus on His way to the Cross, was the knowledge of Him which they already possessed. Two truths in particular which they had learned better than any one else concerning Jesus, they allowed to stand in the way of their further understanding of Him. They had been taught His wonderful power. They had been eye-witnesses of His mighty works. They began to believe that Jesus could do anything. This truth of the power of the Son of Man they were ready to receive, and they stopped with the knowledge of it. He who had power from God could not be taken and killed by the Pharisees. So they grasped with eager hope the truth that Jesus was the promised Messiah of Israel, and missed the deeper truth of His character, that God so loved the world. Then again the truth which they had learned better than any others of Jesus' wonderful kindness, and justice, and humanity, in their partial view of it, may have hidden from their eyes the full revelation which He would have them perceive of His Divine life. How could He who had power over death, and who had so pitied two sisters that He had restored their brother to them, and who had enveloped their lives in a friendship of wonderful daily thoughtfulness—how could He, having all power, go away from them, leave them comfortless, throw them back again upon the world, and disappoint their high hopes of Him? No wonder Peter thought it was impossible, and even said impulsively, "Be it far from Thee, Lord!" The truth of Christ's friendship which they did know pre-

vented them from understanding the diviner secret of God's sacrificial love for the world, which they might have learned. So they who knew the Lord best, misunderstood Him the most; and Jesus went before His disciples in a deeper purpose and a diviner thought than they perceived. Our text reads like a devout apology of the disciples for their singular misunderstanding of Jesus Christ. The providence of God had taught them their mistake. And very instructive for us is the method by which God corrected the false perception of the disciples, and opened their eyes to true and larger knowledge of the Lord. They overcame their misunderstanding, and were brought to better understanding of Jesus Christ, through the trial and the task of their faith. These two, trials and tasks, are God's ways of correcting men's imperfect faiths. For you will recall how those disciples, at the time of the crucifixion, and while they were waiting in Jerusalem, learned in their disenchantment, and were taught through that fearful strain and trial of their faith, as they had never been before, of what Spirit Jesus was, and what His real mission to this world was; and thus they were prepared to see and to become apostles of the risen Lord. That trial of their faith, while Jesus was mocked, and scourged, and delivered to death, and crucified between two thieves, and buried—all the light blotted from their skies, all the proud ambition broken in their souls—yet in His death a new, strange expectancy awakened in their hearts, and on the third day a vision seen which made all things a new world to them—that trial of their faith was the Lord's method of teaching the disciples what before had remained hidden from them even in the plainest words of Jesus. And then this knowledge of the new, larger truth of Christ's work was rounded out, and filled full of a steady, clear light to them, by the task immediately given them to do in the name of the crucified and risen Lord. They learned at Pentecost what Christianity was to be. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 35-43. A certain blind man sat by the wayside.—*The blind man's pertinacity and cure*:—This teaches us—I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE IMMEDIATE SEIZING OF OPPORTUNITIES. II. THE IMPORTANCE OF PERTINACITY, IN THE AFFAIRS OF THE SOUL. III. THE ROOT OF THIS PROMPTNESS OF ACTION—OF THIS UNDAUNTED PERTINACITY—WAS FAITH. IV. THE RESTORED SIGHT IS USED IN FOLLOWING CHRIST, AND IN GLORIFYING GOD. (*Anon.*) *Blind Bartimeus*:—I. HINDRANCES WHICH BESET US IN COMING TO CHRIST FOR MERCY. 1. Our own blindness. 2. Impediments that others cast in the way. II. ACTIONS OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR OUR COMING TO CHRIST. 1. Jesus stood still. 2. On Jesus showing Himself favourable, then at once did multitude. 3. In eagerness to go to Jesus, man left garment behind (Mark x. 50). Must cast off custom and habit of sin. Then, going to the Saviour will be easy, and prayer will be heard and answered. III. BLESSING RECEIVED; EFFECT PRODUCED. 1. What the poor man willed, the Lord granted. 2. A new follower. Application: 1. Let no worldly hindrances debar from Christ. 2. Many encouragements to go. Go. 3. Having gone, truly, wholly—surely follow Him. (*Clergyman's Magazine.*) *The soul's crisis*:—I. Now, looking stedfastly that this may be the case, I wish to speak very pointedly to you about two or three things. First, when Jesus passed by the blind man it was to that man a DAY OF HOPE. It was an hour of hope to that blind man, and if Jesus passes by now this is an hour of hope to you. But, does He pass by? I answer—Yes. There are different respects in which this may be interpreted of our Lord's conduct. In a certain sense He has been passing by some of you ever since you began to discern right from wrong. More especially is it a time of Christ's passing by when the gospel is preached with power. II. Secondly, as it was a time of hope to that poor blind man, so was it especially a TIME OF ACTIVITY. You that anxiously desire salvation, regard attentively these words. A man cannot be saved by what he does; salvation is in Christ, yet no man is saved except as he seeks earnestly after Christ. 1. This man listened attentively. 2. He inquired with eagerness what it meant. 3. When this man had asked the question, and had been told in reply that Jesus of Nazareth passed by, notice what he did next, he began to pray. His cry was a prayer, and his prayer was a cry. 4. After this man had thus pleaded, it is noteworthy that Jesus stood still and called him. That much-prized, though all patched and filthy garment, he threw right away; it might have made him a minute or two slower, so off he threw it, and away he flung it. Ah! and it is a great mercy when a poor soul feels that it can throw away anything and everything to get to Christ. 5. Once more. When this man had come to Jesus, and Jesus said to him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" the man returned a straightforward and intelligent answer, "Lord, that I might receive my

sight." 6. Still, I cannot withhold one other remark. That which really brought salvation to this blind man was his faith, for Christ says, "Thy faith hath saved thee." Now, here is the greatest point of all—faith! Faith; for work without faith is of little worth. Faith is the great saving grace; it is the real life-germ. III. It was also AN HOUR OF CRISIS. IV. Lastly, remember that this hour of Jesus passing by is AN HOUR THAT WILL SOON BE GONE. Did you notice that word, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by?" (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The passing Christ recognized:—*As people do not recognize that Christ passeth near to them when they are in health, even so they do not see as they ought His hand in their sickness. An invalid lamented to a lady who came to see her, that she had abused her health before it was taken from her. The friend replied, "I hope that now you will take care not to abuse your sickness." Assuredly we abuse our sickness when we do not see the hand of God in it, and do not allow Jesus of Nazareth, who passeth by our bed, to bring us nearer to Himself. (*E. J. Hardy, M.A.*) *Enthusiasm rebuked:—*Blind Bartimeus has to encounter obstructionists; the unsympathizing crowd interfered to silence the man. "Hold thy peace, Bartimeus; have done with all this frenzied excitement; Christ has other things to do than listen to thee!" So long ago was it a settled matter that a man may get excited about anything in the wide world except about Christ! You are quite at liberty to get excited about the latest war news, about politics, about the race-course, about the money-market, about anything you like, save the interests of your soul. Yes; these highly respectable people of eighteen hundred years ago have left a numerous progeny. There are always plenty of persons ready to give good advice to seeking souls, or to young Christians, after this fashion: "Keep quiet, my friend; don't get excited; hush! don't make a noise about such things; whatever you do, keep calm, and don't make a fuss." I observe that the devil has his own fire-brigade, who are always ready with their hose—waiting to throw cold water on any little flame that the Holy Spirit kindles, and to offer sedatives to any startled sinner who is beginning to be in earnest about his soul. These excellent people will tell you that it is all right and proper to be religious, to be earnest up to a certain point, but you must be careful not to go beyond this. When you come to inquire what this point is, you make the astonishing discovery that it is just the point at which religion begins to do one any real good! Be earnest, so long as your earnestness does not bring you salvation; be pious, so long as your piety fails to reveal the living God to your heart; but be sure and stop short of receiving God's gift of everlasting life, or you will be going too far! (*W. M. Hay Atken, M.A.*) *The blind sister:—*A year ago last winter an affecting scene occurred in the streets of Baltimore. Two little sisters were looking through a large store window at the toys within, and trying to describe what they saw to a little blind sister who was with them. They were exhausting their feeble powers of description to bring home to the mind of their blind companion what they saw, although she listened greedily. But, after all, they failed to present anything more than an imperfect representation. The gentleman who saw the circumstance said that it was extremely touching, that they tried hard to describe the collection in the store, but they could not do it. That is just like our trying to tell you of Christ. *Opening the eyes of faith:—*By merely opening my eyes all the glories of light burst upon me. I take in at a glance the human face or the stretch of magnificent scenery. I gaze across the vast ocean, or, looking up through the night, I grasp millions of worlds and embrace infinitude. What an amazing result from merely opening the eyes and looking up! How often, too, a single incident, the meeting of a particular friend or the encountering of some difficulty or danger, or the gaining of a little information, colours the whole of a man's subsequent life—indeed, gives him an entirely different direction and turn. His whole attitude is altered by what occupied but a moment. It is, then, quite in accordance with God's arrangement and man's world that great things should depend on very simple matters. And the belief that Jesus is the Son of God, though a simple thing, though not a complex, laborious, lengthened operation, is yet the very act most fitted to open the soul for God. It is not labour that is required for the reception of God. It is the feeling of emptiness, and desire to receive. It is trust in God, the belief in His great love. No labour will enable a man to behold the light of the sun or the multitude of the stars, but opening his eyes will. Opening the eyes to God's great love in Christ, receiving that marvellous display of God's inmost heart, that opens the heart, that brings into true accord with God, that gives a wholly different outlook on the world, that alters a man's entire attitude. (*J. Leckie, D.D.*) *The cure of blind Bartimeus:—*Let us therefore review THE

CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE HISTORY BEFORE US—and endeavour to derive some useful admonitions from it. One of the characters of our Saviour's miracles was publicity. Impostors require secrecy and darkness. Thus He recovered this man before a multitude in the highway, and close to the city of Jericho. Several of our Saviour's miracles seem to have been unintentional. Thus it is said, "As He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men, that were lepers, who stood afar off." Thus again we read, that "when He came nigh to the gate of the city of Nain, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." And so here: "It came to pass, that as He was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way-side begging." You may ask then, Was His finding these objects accidental or designed? Unquestionably, designed. He was not taken by surprise. He saw the end from the beginning. His plan was formed; and He was "working all things after the counsel of His own will." Our Saviour is acquainted with all our sins, but He requires us to confess them; He understands all our wants, but He commands us to acknowledge them; He is always graciously affected towards our case, but He would have us properly affected with it ourselves. He knew the desire of this man, but He would know it from him himself; and therefore, when he was come near, He asked him, saying, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" So here: as soon as Bartimeus received sight from the Lord Jesus, "he followed Him in the way, glorifying God." We may view this two ways. It was first an evidence of the reality and perfection of the cure. In other cases where human skill has removed blindness by couching, the restored orbs cannot be immediately used; light is admitted into them by degrees; the man cannot measure distances, nor judge with accuracy; and he is not fit to be left to himself. But it is said our Lord "did all things well." His manner distinguished him—the man saw at once clearly; and was able to conduct himself. Secondly, it was an improvement of the greatness of the mercy. "I can never," says he, "discharge my obligations to such a gracious and almighty Friend. But let me devote myself to His service—let me continually ask, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'" From the narrative thus explained, I would take occasion to bring forward four admonitions. 1. BE PERSUADED THAT YOU ARE ALL SPIRITUALLY IN THE CONDITION OF BARTIMEUS—and that without Divine illumination, you are no more qualified for the concerns of the moral world than a blind man is for those of the natural world. 2. BE PERSUADED THAT, WITH REGARD TO THE REMOVAL OF THIS BLINDNESS, YOU ARE IN AS HOPEFUL A CONDITION AS THIS POOR MAN. In all these miracles our blessed Lord holds Himself forth as the all-sufficient helper of sinners. 3. BE PERSUADED TO IMITATE THE IMPORTUNITY OF THIS BLIND BEGGAR, IN CRYING FOR MERCY. And especially let your importunity, like this poor man's, appear with regard to two things. First, like him, seize the present moment. Let not the opportunity afforded you be lost by delay. Secondly, like him, be not silenced by discouragement and opposition. 4. If He has healed you!—if you can say, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see"—LIKE BARTIMEUS, BE CAREFUL TO FOLLOW THE SAVIOUR. This is the best way to evidence your cure. This is also the best way to improve your deliverance. Thus you will "show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." Follow Him, then, as an imitator of His example. (*W. Jay.*) What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?—A worshipper questioned:—All who come to church should come not to keep up an ancient form, do a duty, discharge an obligation, but to meet with Christ. And we do meet with Him (Matt. xviii. 20). And He asks of each the question in the text. Three classes of replies. 1. The reply of some is, "Let us alone—leave us." Diogenes wished Alexander, as the greatest favour he could bestow, to "stand out of my sunshine." Christ stands between some men and what they imagine to be sunshine. (1) How ungrateful is such a reply. What pain and grief it must give Him who died to save us. (2) How mad it is. If we could succeed we should have destroyed our only hope—broken the only bridge by which we might return. 2. The reply of others is, "Lull our consciences to rest." They want ease, but not holiness, pardon without change of heart. (1) How vain is such a search. Christ's offers are always coupled with requirements (Matt. xi. 28-30; v. 8). (2) How utterly worthless it would be. It would be a sham, and we should know it and despise it. 3. The reply of others is, "Cleanse, purify, renew us." Like this man they ask for sight. Like the leper they ask to be made clean. They cry in their doubts and fears, "I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." And such never come in vain. Christ meets with them, and though they touch but the hem of His garment, grants their requests (Luke iv. 18).

(J. Ogle.) *Blindness and the blind.*—Much as blind people lose by not having the use of their eyes, they have often made themselves not only useful, but even distinguished. Professor Sanderson, of Cambridge, England, lost his sight when only a year old, but became a great mathematician. Dr. Blackwood was master of Greek, Latin, Italian, and French, and a poet of no mean degree. Dr. Henry Moyes was skilled in geometry, optics, and astronomy, and he could judge very accurately of the size of any room in which he happened to be by the effects of his voice. John Metcalf, an Englishman, was employed first as a waggoner, and afterwards became a surveyor of highways. By the help of a long staff, he would traverse the most difficult mountain roads, and was able to do more than many men accomplish with their eyes open. William Metcalf laid out roads and built bridges. Euler, the mathematician, was blind. John Gough, who was an accurate botanist and zoologist, was also blind. Lord Cranbourne, blind from his childhood, published a history of France for the young. Huber, who has written such an interesting book about bees, was blind. Homer was blind. The same was true of Ossian and Milton. Zisca, the famous Bohemian general, performed great acts of valour after the loss of his sight. The Rev. J. Crosse, vicar of Bradford, England, was blind, but as he knew the Church service by heart, he was able to conduct public worship with impressiveness and solemnity, only requiring the help of another person to read the lessons for him. (J. N. Norton, D.D.) *Spiritual blindness and sight.*—To be vain is to be blind, and to persist in blindness, and in the ignorance of one's blindness, and to refuse the opportunities of sight. To be worldly is to be blind; to grope among the dusty ways, the opaque and earthly objects of this lower sphere, contented with their darkness, or expecting light to shine out from it—is to be grossly blind. To be without religion, to look not up above for cheering and guiding light, to seek not the rays of that eternal Sun, which alone can warm and invigorate the soul—that is to be blind. But to be humble is to see. To feel that we are ignorant, that we are weak, that we are poor, and that the darkness within needs illumination from the Light above, and to pray for that illumination is to have our eyes opened, and to see. To receive Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith, to go to Him for the precept and example, the doctrine and direction which we so much need, and which we can obtain from no one but from Him who was sent to us from the Father of lights, is to be cured of our blindness, and to receive our sight. To follow His blessed steps, to write His instructions on the tables of our hearts, to shun all allurements and pass over all obstacles which interfere with the duty of discipleship, is to walk as children of the light and of the day. (F. W. P. Greenwood, D.D.)

CHAPTER XIX.

VERS. 1-10. A man named Zaccheus.—*Zaccheus the publican.*—**I. THE GRACIOUS ENTRY.** **II. A COMMENDABLE CURIOSITY.** 1. This curiosity unusual. (1) A rich man anxious to see Jesus. (2) A rich man overcoming hindrance that he might gratify such curiosity. (3) Are there any here anxious to see Jesus? (4) Are you willing to seek Him now? **III. A WONDERFUL SURPRISE.** 1. In the unexpected detection. 2. In the unexpected summons by name. 3. In the unexpected declaration of Jesus. **IV. AN UNUSUAL RESPONSE.** 1. In its alacrity. 2. In its obedience. 3. In its sincerity. (1) What an example to follow! (2) What blessedness such obedience ever brings! **V. AN UNCALLED-FOR COMPLAINT.** 1. In its spirit. 2. In its argument. **VI. A GENUINE PENITENT.** 1. Shown in his implied confession. 2. In his sincere reformation. 3. In the fact of his salvation. **VII. THE MISSION AND PURPOSE OF CHRIST.** Practical questions: 1. Have you ever desired to see Jesus? 2. Have you ever truly sought to find Jesus? 3. Have you ever believed on Jesus? 4. If not, will you now? (D. C. Hughes, M.A.) *The Christian not of the crowd.*—Shall we have no interest in Him? Shall we not desire to see of Him all that we can? We cannot, indeed, with all our endeavours and reaching upward, see His countenance and person, as Zaccheus did, by mounting into a tree; but we may see much more than he did, who saw Him but in the flesh, not yet glorified. We may see Him in spirit, we may behold Him through faith, and in such glory as Zaccheus had not power to conceive. We may have in our hearts the tokens of

His presence, and we may receive from Him the earnest of that glory with which He will clothe His people, that they may be like unto Him. But then, again, after they have begun to entertain something like a wish and desire, do not many desist, from the fear of being thought singular, from the dread of appearing unlike other people! They dare not make themselves so conspicuous. And yet what rules of modesty will not people break, what public notice will they not brave, when some attractive spectacle of this world's pomp and splendour is to be seen! Then the man of gravity, then the female of delicacy, are seen to make no scruples of mounting up above the heads of the crowd into the most preposterous and ludicrous positions. (*R. W. Evans, B.D.*) *The conversion of Zaccheus*:—I. How DID ZACCHEUS HAPPEN TO BE CONVERTED? He wanted to see Jesus, what sort of a man (*τίς ἐστίν*) He was—a low motive, but it was the salvation of Zaccheus. It is surprising that he should never have seen or heard Jesus, when Jericho was so near Jerusalem, and Jesus was so famous a prophet. The ignorance of intelligent men concerning religion is astonishing. We should encourage people to go to see who Jesus is, *pray* that they may go, from curiosity if from no higher motive. Taking Zaccheus's standpoint, the awakening of his curiosity probably explains how he happened to be converted. From Christ's standpoint we get a different view. He had Zaccheus in mind, so it appeared. When He came to the tree and called his name and bade him come down, He said, "To-day I must abide at thy house." "I must." This was among the events in the fixed, predetermined order of those last solemn days. "To-day" the seeking sinner and the seeking Saviour were to meet. "We see from the story," says Dr. Brown, "that we may look for unexpected conversions." II. WHAT CONVERTED ZACCHEUS? Suppose he had been asked the question that evening. He would have given different answers. He would have spoken of the influence of Bartimeus, or of Matthew. Again, he would speak of the call of Jesus, the brief, thrilling words, beginning with his own name. Or, in another mood, he would say, "It was because I heeded, first the voice within, and then that voice Divine. I converted myself. I listened. I came down. I received Him. How fortunate that I took that resolution!" At another time he would emphasize the work of the Holy Spirit. "I never should have taken the first step, the thought of it would never have lodged in my mind, without some power from without moving me. It was not like me. It was contrary to the whole course of my life. It must have been the work of the Holy Ghost." So it is in the case of every convert. Each answer would contain a phase of the truth. III. WHEN WAS ZACCHEUS CONVERTED? "Somewhere between the limb and the ground"—Moody. The prodigal was converted when he said, "I will arise," Zaccheus when he said, "I will go down." There is no interval between surrender and conversion. If Zaccheus had died as he moved to descend, he would have been saved. God does not delay us. He gives when we take. IV. WHAT WERE THE EVIDENCES OF THE CONVERSION OF ZACCHEUS? 1. He received Christ. Notice that it was Zaccheus who received Christ. We must receive Him before He can receive us (*John i. 12*). 2. Joyfulness. He received Him joyfully. 3. Zaccheus "stood." He made, that is, an open confession. It was harder to do this than to climb the tree. This, every true convert will do (*Rom. x. 6-10*). 4. Confession and reformation. (*G. R. Leavitt.*) *The seeker sought*:—I. THE CHARACTER OF ZACCHEUS. A Hebrew name with a Greek termination, signifying "pure." A man may have a noble ancestry and an ignoble calling—a good name and a bad reputation. There is an important difference between a man's reputation and a man's character. Reputation is what men say about us, character is what a man is. 1. We may learn from this verse something about Zaccheus's social standing. "He was the chief among the publicans." Some men are exposed to special temptations from the positions they hold. A dishonest calling blunts our finest sensibilities, hardens our heart, and degrades our whole nature. 2. We may learn from this verse something about Zaccheus's secular position. "And he was rich." II. THE CURIOSITY OF ZACCHEUS. Curiosity, which is commonly regarded as a dangerous disposition, is natural to man, and may be serviceable in the most sacred pursuits. It excites inquiry, it stimulates research, and it leads to the solution of many of the dark problems of life. 1. In this case curiosity awakened an earnest desire to see Jesus. 2. In this case curiosity overcame the difficulties that were in the way of seeing Jesus. III. THE CALLING OF ZACCHEUS. 1. This was a personal call. Christ not only knew his name, but his nature. He knew the place he occupied, and the thoughts he cherished. 2. This was an urgent call. "Zaccheus, make haste, and come down." The coming of Christ is unexpected, and His stay brief. He is passing

to-day, and may have passed to-morrow. What we have to do must be done quickly. 3. This was an effectual call. "And he made haste, and came down." What a mighty energy there is in the word of Christ! At His word the blind received their sight, and the dead started to life again. IV. THE CONVERSION OF ZACCHÆUS. "This day is salvation come to thy house." Personal contact with Christ ensures special blessing from Christ. When Christ is present with us, there will be light in the eye, music in the voice, and gladness in the heart. 1. This was a present salvation. (1) What a marvellous change was wrought in his character! The dishonest man became honest, the selfish man became generous, and the sinful man became righteous. (2) What a glorious change was wrought in his service! Instead of living for self, he began to live for the Saviour; instead of seeking the things of time, he began to seek the things of eternity. 2. This was a practical salvation. "And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor." This is a splendid liberality. He does not give a tenth, not a fifth, but the half. He does not say I will leave at my decease, but I give during my lifetime. When Christ comes to abide in a rich man's house, he will open his heart to give to the poor. (*J. T. Woodhouse, M.A.*)

The character of Zacchæus:—I. THE MAN. 1. His nationality. A Jew. 2. His official position. Chief among the publicans. 3. His financial condition. Rich. As is too often the case, Zacchæus, perhaps, owed his official position more to his purse than his purity—more to what he had than to what he was. From the view I get of Zacchæus, I am not surprised that "he was rich." Those who compass chieftancy and riches are the men who know how to step out of the beaten track, and without regard to sneers or criticism, can "run" and "climb," in order to accomplish their object. He possessed certain traits of character which are the secret of success in every department of human endeavour. 1. He was self-reliant. He did not passively rely upon others for his inspiration and resolves. He was a man of originality of thought and purpose—a sort of genius in method and movement. 2. He was prompt and persevering. Zacchæus knew how to handle an opportunity. An old Latin maxim says: "Opportunity has hair in front, but behind she is bald; if you seize her by the forelock, you may hold her; but if suffered to escape, not Jupiter himself can catch her." By the style of the man, and the fact that his ancestry is not mentioned, I am inclined to think that Zacchæus began life a poor boy. The majority of those who have risen to riches and honour, have come up through the rough regions of toil and poverty, and were not ashamed afterwards to work with their own hands, though possessed of thousands of this world's goods. 3. His purpose. "To see Jesus, who He was." Why so anxious to "see"? why not be content with hearing? There were thousands who had seen Him and formed their opinions as to "who He was," and were not backward in telling them. The Pharisee would have told him: "He is a devil"; the scribe, "a fanatic"; the priest, "a blasphemer"; the Rabbi, "a heretic"; the poor, "a prophet"; the many, "an impostor"; the few, a "God." Zacchæus could not afford, therefore, to trust to hearsay; and so, like a wise man, he made up his mind to see for himself. He was a good judge of human nature, and could form a pretty correct opinion of a man, by getting a good square look at him. The noblest purpose that can actuate the human heart is expressed in these three little words: "To see Jesus." 4. His failure. "Could not for the press, because he was little." Here is a man earnestly trying "to see Jesus," who is opposed and defeated by obstacles he had no hand in producing, and over which he had no control. (1) "The press," and (2) "Little of stature." He had no hand in producing either of these, and yet they defeated him. But, was that fair? Has Zacchæus had a fair chance? Whether fair or not, he has had all the chance he will have, unless he makes another. 5. His determination. "He ran before and climbed into a sycamore." Here we get an idea of the force and fibre of the man. He did not waste his precious time in upbraiding himself for being "little," or finding fault with his surroundings. He simply started off in search of a better vantage ground. No time is more unprofitably spent than that which is used in finding fault with our instruments and surroundings. Zacchæus never would have been "chief among the publicans, and rich," if he had not learned to make a virtue out of necessity, and turn even failure into a pedestal from which to reach a grander success. When a man's conscious littleness compels him to "run" and "climb," he will master his obstacles and get a better knowledge of things than the men who think they can see all there is to be seen without climbing. In a world like this, where we are all "little" in so many places, no man

will reach the highest success unless he feels his littleness and knows how to "climb." Learn from this narrative that all barriers give way before the man who has made up his mind to see Jesus Christ. (*T. Kelly.*)

The conversion of Zaccheus:—Zaccheus was undoubtedly, up to this time, a worldly, grasping, wicked man; who, though a Hebrew by birth and education, had so far forgotten God, and allowed the love of money to master him, that in his business relations he did not always observe the laws of equity or the principles of righteousness. The impression I get of him from the narrative is, that he was a sharp, shrewd, business man; a man whose judgment in business matters was unusually good, and who, if he did any business at all, would be sure to make money. The love of money, and the conscious power to make it, cannot exist in the same person without great possibilities of evil. Ambition. Rivalry. But though Zaccheus was a grasping, selfish man, yet I am profoundly impressed with his independent spirit and individuality of character. He is a striking illustration of the fact that neither riches nor worldly position can satisfy the cravings of the human soul; and that a ready response is accorded to gospel overtures, sometimes where we least expect it. A mere surface reading of the narrative can give us no adequate idea of the force of character it required to face the tremendous discouragements which Zaccheus had to meet in becoming a follower of Jesus Christ. I notice just two of these:—1. He had no character to begin with. His whole environment tended to keep him as he was. The very social atmosphere in which he lived tended to blight every aspiration and hope of becoming a better man. However badly he might act, he had nothing to lose, for he was already an outcast from society. Another serious and humiliating fact which Zaccheus had to face was—2. His dishonest business transactions. "If I have taken anything of any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." That kind of restitution would soon seriously impoverish the bank accounts of some people. It would compel many of our mushroom aristocracy and sky-rocket millionaires to go to the almshouse, or turn their hands to honest labour, and "earn their bread by the sweat of their brow." Zaccheus does not use the words, "If I have taken anything," as though he were in doubt, and wished to leave a similar doubt on the mind of others. His guilt is clearly implied in his own words. And no person who did not carry the making of a noble Christian character would have made such a declaration—would have deliberately entered upon a course of life which, at the very outset, involved the unearthing of a life of fraud and dishonesty, which no doubt no person could have proven, and perhaps of which nobody had the slightest suspicion. Now let us turn to the incident of this memorable day. Notice here—

I. HOW PUSH AND PERSEVERANCE TURN DEFEAT INTO VICTORY. A few moments ago he was completely defeated—"could not see Jesus" for the "press." Now he has a better view of Him than any man in the crowd. So the earnest seeker will always find that the very "press" of isms and sects and critics that surround the Saviour, and which compel him to "run and climb," to think and act for himself, will be the means of securing for him a clearer and more satisfactory view of Jesus Christ than he could have possibly obtained on the ordinary highway of common effort.

1. Observe the movements of Jesus. (1) "He came to the place,"—He always does. No man ever yet started out with the full purpose to see Jesus Christ and failed. (2) His method. He "looked." 2. Notice the order and significance of the descriptive words in this verse: "When Jesus came to the place, He looked . . . and saw . . . and said." That is the order of description needed, but, alas, sadly lacking in our churches. We have too many who can look without seeing; they possess so little of the Master's spirit that they can pass along the highways of life, and through orchards of sycamores, and never set eyes on a sinner anxious "to see Jesus."

II. THAT PROMPT, UNQUESTIONING OBEDIENCE ALWAYS SECURES THE DIVINE APPROVAL AND BLESSING. 1. The Saviour's command. "Zaccheus, come down." This command was both startling and unexpected. Zaccheus had no thought of being addressed personally by the Saviour, or of being called upon to come down in the presence of the crowd. In coming in vital contact with Jesus Christ, the seeker always finds new, unexpected things happening; and, like Naaman, is soon made to see that God's way is not man's.

2. The Saviour's perfect knowledge of the seeker. "Zaccheus, come down." There is something unutterably precious in the fact that God is intimately acquainted with all our names. No person can assume any attitude of service, or self-sacrifice, or supplication before God, without having his very name associated with the act. "Zaccheus, come down." Implying that his character and wants were as well known as his

name. 3. The prompt obedience of Zaccheus. The conversion of Zaccheus reached not only his head and his pocket, but it also reached his conscience. No conversion, however loudly proclaimed, will be of any lasting value unless it includes and practically displays a New Testament conscience. (T. Kelly.)

Zaccheus a type of the Christ-seeker.—I. HOW TO SEEK CHRIST, AS ILLUSTRATED BY ZACCHEUS. 1. We must go in the way along which He appoints us to go. (1) Christ's way is that of the sanctuary. (2) Christ's way is that of the Holy Scriptures. (3) Christ's way is that of the closet. 2. We must go with earnest resolution. Be not deterred by station, connections, business occupation, or fear of abuse or ridicule. 3. We must go in time. There comes a last opportunity to each. It may be to-day. II. WHAT COMES OF SUCH SEEKING OF CHRIST? 1. Christ stops in His course to take note of the seeker. 2. He comes to such homes and blesses them. Where Jesus enters, salvation goes. 3. He makes the seeker's heart just and tender. 4. He defends us against persecution. Conclusion—1. Have you ever thus sought Christ? 2. What effect has your Christian profession had on your life? (P. C. Croll.)

Lessons from this passage.—From an attentive consideration of the distinct parts of this passage of St. Luke's Gospel, we may derive many useful truths and salutary reflections. 1. First, let us, like Zaccheus, have a view to the improvement of our minds in piety and virtue, even in the gratification of curiosity. Instead of flocking, with childish folly, to such trifling amusements as are unworthy of a rational being, we should endeavour to combine pleasure with instruction, and the employment of time with advantage. While thousands would have crowded with joy to see a pageant, a triumph, or the barbarous spectacle of Roman games, "Zaccheus ran and climbed up into a sycamore-tree to see our Lord pass by"; and when He honoured him so far as to take up His abode with him for that day, he not only received Him joyfully, but, without doubt, listened to His conversation with reverence, and heard the glorious truths which His lips revealed with adoration and praise. "This day is salvation come to this house." 2. The hospitality of Zaccheus, and his great satisfaction on this occasion, may direct us also in the choice and entertainment of our friends. The common intercourses of the world are too often nothing but associations of pleasure or confederacies of vice. 3. We may further learn from our blessed Lord's conduct towards Zaccheus, to banish from our minds those uncharitable prejudices which so strongly marked the character of the Jews. (J. Hewlett, B.D.)

Lessons.—1. Let the desire of all of you, in coming up to the house of God, be, like that of Zaccheus, to see Jesus. You may see Him, and should earnestly desire to see Him, by knowledge and faith, in the glories of His person, character, and redemption. If you obtain a sight of Him, and come to know who He is, in this way, you will be like Abraham, who "rejoiced," or greatly desired, "to see His day, and saw it, and was glad"; and the words will then be applicable to you, in their best sense, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see." 2. See that those of you who profess to be Christians give the same evidences of conversion as Zaccheus. Remember that repentance is to be judged of, not so much by its terror at the time, as by its permanent effects on the heart and life. You must, like Zaccheus, "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." (Jas. Foot, M.A.)

He sought to see Jesus.—Obstacles.—The experience of Zaccheus, in his efforts "to see Jesus," is a striking illustration of a universal fact in human history. Men are constantly opposed and thwarted, in their efforts to do right, by obstacles and enemies which they never produced. Satan, for instance, is the persistent opposer of all who seek "to see Jesus Christ." But man had no hand in producing Satan; he was here before man came, and, for aught I know, here because he saw man coming. You may start out to see Huxley, or Tyndall, or any of the great philosophers or scientists, and Satan will pay no attention to you; but if you start out "to see Jesus Christ" he will instantly summon his resources, and form a "press" against you. How persistently he follows the young Christian with the fascinations of the world on the one hand, and the "press" of discouragements on the other. Then the laws of heredity come in and raise up obstacles, the full power of which our limited knowledge does not enable us to compute. We all take on hereditary damage, of one kind or another, from our ancestry. This, of course, is soon rendered vastly more serious by our own moral behaviour, and the result is a dwarfed, squattish spiritual stature. So that the ordinary "press" of the world's cares and attractions is quite sufficient to shut us out from God and a saving view of Jesus Christ. So Zaccheus found himself defeated. "Could not." Mark the descriptive words here: "Chief," "Rich," "Could not." Then chieftancy and riches cannot do everything for a man. Official

position and wealth go only a little way in removing the distressing and annoying phases of life. Human power, however commanding and extensive, soon reaches the solid masonry of the impossible, upon which the only thing it can scribble is the little words, "Could not." Let us add another descriptive word, and we shall see how it was that Zaccheus failed. "He was little." The words "little" and "could not" are closely related in human affairs. Every man is "little" somewhere—"little" in spots. No man is fully hemisphered on both sides of his nature. (*T. Kelly.*) *Making an effort to see Jesus*:—The ants are a little people, but they are exceeding wise. People that want size must make up for it by sagacity. A short man up in a tree is really taller than the tallest man who only stands on the ground. Happily for little men, the giants have seldom any great wit. Bigness is not greatness; and yet smallness is in itself no blessing, though it may be the occasion of a man's winning one. It is not pleasant to see every one about you a bigger person than yourself. And this is a sight many do see who are not dwarfs in stature. But Zaccheus was a dwarf in stature; and, notwithstanding, had become a man of consideration. But they called him "Zacchy," or even "little Zacchy" sometimes no doubt; and, rich as he was, and firm hold as he had on many people, he was far from happy. Though small, he was strong; but then, though strong, he was sour. He despised the religious people, and yet did not like to be despised by them. Many men knew he was cleverer than they, but they never forgot he was shorter! This man could not come at Jesus for the press. Though not a blind man, he had his difficulties in seeing. But he would very much like to see Jesus, what kind of man He was. People pointed him out, and said, "That's Zaccheus; isn't he a little fellow?" The short man felt a curiosity as to the personal appearance of the famous Prophet. We may be sure Zaccheus had heard good things of Jesus Christ. And he was soon to hear good words from Him, words more healing, more fragrant, than the Jericho balsams. Zaccheus had gone on before. You must get at your tree before you can climb it! He makes haste, runs, climbs, for he is very eager in this business; and he not only sees Jesus, but, what is much better, is seen by Him. If a man looks for God, God knows that he is looking. He that seeks is sought. Take trouble to win a blessing harder for you to get than for others, and you shall have one bestowed on you better than you sought for. (*T. T. Lynch.*) *Difficulties overcome*:—We have all read and heard of the "pursuit of knowledge under difficulties," and of the remarkable way in which these have often been overcome. The shepherd, with no apparatus save his thread and beads, has lain on his back on the starry night, mapped the heavens, and unconsciously become a distinguished astronomer. The peasant boy, with no tools save his rude knife, and a visit now and then to a neighbouring town, has begun his scientific education by producing a watch that could mark the time. The blind man, trampling upon impossibilities, has explored the economy of the beehive, and, more wondrous still, lectured on the laws of light. The timid stammerer, with pebbles in his mouth, and the roar of the sea-surge in his ear, has attained the correctest elocution, and swayed as one man the changeful tides of the mighty masses of the Athenian democracy. All these were expedients to master difficulties. And now notice the expedient which Zaccheus adopts to overcome his difficulties. Yonder, in the way where Jesus is to pass, is a sycamore-tree. It stands by the wayside. Its roots are thick and numerous, its girth is ample, its wide-spread arms may be called gigantic, its leaf resembles the mulberry, its fruit is like that of the fig—indeed it is a member of the fig family. An itinerant preacher in the backwoods once puzzled himself and his hearers with an elaborate criticism about this tree. He and his audience were familiar only with the sycamore of their flatter river bottoms, which are tall as a steeple, and smooth as hypocrisy. "Why," said the orator, "a squirrel can't climb them," and the conclusion reached was that the sycamore must have been a mulberry tree. But Dr. Thomson, who retails this anecdote, assures us that the sycamore is every way adapted to the purposes for which Zaccheus used it, for he saw one in which were a score of boys and girls, who could easily look down upon any crowd passing beneath. Zaccheus fixes his eye upon the sycamore in the distance. If he were upon one of its branches his object would be gained; but then he is not a boy. Besides, he is a rich man, and the chief amongst the publicans, and what will the people say if he climbs it to see Jesus of Nazareth? Yea, what will the boys say and do, who are perhaps on the tree already? There is a struggle going on within his bosom, but there is not a single moment to lose, for Jesus is coming. Regardless of what others may say, he becomes like a boy again; he runs to the tree and climbs it. (*Dr. Macauland.*)

Zaccheus, make haste and come down.—*Our Saviour's visit to Zaccheus*.—Our Saviour for the first time invited Himself to a man's house. Thus He proved the freeness and authority of His grace. "I am found of them that sought Me not" (Isa. lxx. 1.) We ought rather to invite Him to our houses. We should at least cheerfully accept His offer to come to us. Perhaps at this hour He presses Himself upon us. Yet we may feel ourselves quite as unlikely to entertain our Lord as Zaccheus seemed to be. He was a man—1. In a despised calling—a publican, or tax-collector. 2. In bad odour with respectable folk. 3. Rich, with the suspicion of getting his wealth wrongly. 4. Eccentric, for else he had hardly climbed a tree. 5. Excommunicated because of his becoming a Roman tax-gatherer. 6. Not at all the choice of society in any respect. To such a man Jesus came; and He may come to us even if we are similarly taboed by our neighbours, and are therefore disposed to fear that He will pass us by. I. LET US CONSIDER THE NECESSITY WHICH PRESSED UPON THE SAVIOUR TO ABIDE IN THE HOUSE OF ZACCHEUS. He felt an urgent need of—1. A sinner who needed and would accept His mercy. 2. A person who would illustrate the sovereignty of His choice. 3. A character whose renewal would magnify His grace. 4. A host who would entertain Him with hearty hospitality. 5. A case which would advertise His gospel (vers. 9 and 10). II. LET US INQUIRE WHETHER SUCH A NECESSITY EXISTS IN REFERENCE TO OURSELVES. We can ascertain this by answering the following questions, which are suggested by the behaviour of Zaccheus to our Lord:—1. Will we receive Him this day? "He made haste." 2. Will we receive Him heartily? "Received Him joyfully." 3. Will we receive Him whatever others say? "They all murmured." 4. Will we receive Him as Lord? "He said, Behold, Lord." 5. Will we receive Him so as to place our substance under the control of His laws? (Verse 8.) If these things be so, Jesus must abide with us. He cannot fail to come where He will have such a welcome. III. LET US FULLY UNDERSTAND WHAT THAT NECESSITY INVOLVES. If the Lord Jesus comes to abide in our house—1. We must be ready to face objections at home. 2. We must get rid of all in our house which would be objectionable to Him. Perhaps there is much there which He would never tolerate. 3. We must admit none who would grieve our heavenly Guest. His friendship must end our friendship with the world. 4. We must let Him rule the house and ourselves, without rival or reserve, henceforth and for ever. 5. We must let Him use us and ours as instruments for the further spread of His kingdom. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *God calls men down*:—I. NOTICE SOME OF THE HEIGHTS FROM WHICH GOD'S PEOPLE ARE FETCHED DOWN BY THE GOSPEL. 1. High thoughts of self-importance (2 Cor. x. 4, 5). 2. Natural efforts, or legal endeavours (Rom. x. 3). 3. From the basis of false hopes (Job viii. 13). 4. From carnal confidence (Jer. ii. 37). 5. From vain apologies for sin. II. THEIR SENSATIONS IN COMING DOWN. 1. In spiritual consideration (Psa. cxix. 59). 2. In deep anxiety for salvation (Acts xvi. 30). 3. In despair of salvation but by God (Jer. iii. 23). 4. In gracious resolutions (Luke xv. 18). 5. To self-denying practices (Matt. xvi. 24). 6. To God's righteousness (Rom. iii. 21). III. SOME REMARKS ON THE DAY OF CONVERSION. 1. It is our new birth-day (Isa. xliii. 1). 2. A day of despatch—"Come down" (Heb. iii. 15). 3. Of love and kindness (Ezek. xvi. 6). 4. Of union between Christ and the soul (Hos. ii. 20). IV. REASONS WHY THE LORD CALLS US DOWN. 1. Because it is God's design in the Gospel (Isa. ii. 11-17). 2. Because ascending too high is very dangerous. 3. That free grace may be exalted. 4. That we may meet with Christ (Isa. lvii. 15). INFERENCES:—1. How high and lofty man is in his natural state. 2. Hence God humbles him for his eternal good. 3. The nature of true faith is coming down. 4. Admire the riches of God's grace towards us. (T. B. Baker.) *Christ's words to Zaccheus*:—I shall give you a division which you will not be able to forget, or if you do forget it, you will have nothing to do but simply to turn to the Bible, and look at the text, and the punctuation will give you the heads. I. Look, then, at the first word, "ZACCHEUS." Christ addresses this man by name; He saw him before he went up into the sycamore, and he had not been long there when He called out to him, "Make haste and come down." Oh! but some people say that ministers have no business to be so personal. Well, my friends, they are very unlike their Master, the great model Preacher, if they are not personal. II. Take the next two words for our second head—"MAKE HASTE." We are told in the sequel that Zaccheus did not halt between two opinions, but came down quickly and received Christ joyfully. If you, my unconverted hearer, will listen to me, what I wish to say to you is this—make haste and come to Jesus, for you will never find a more favourable opportunity than the present. Wait ten thousand years, and your sins will not be fewer; God's

mercy will not be greater. The fool who, wishing to cross a river, lay down on its bank till the water would run past, is only a faint emblem of you, if you delay. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." That clock says "now"; this pulse says "now"; this heart says "now." The glorified in heaven and the lost in hell, the one by their songs, the other by their wails, together cry, "Make haste." But, once more, make haste, for your salvation may soon become extremely difficult. Sin is like a fire, it may soon be quenched if the cold water engines are brought to play upon it in time; but let it burn on a few hours, and perhaps a city is laid in ashes. Sin is like a river, the further from the fountain-head the greater the volume, the more rapid and irresistible the current. Sin is like a tree: look at your sapling, your infant's arm may bend it: let a few years pass away, a few summers shine upon it, and a few winters blow upon it, and that tree will hurl defiance at the loudest storm. So with the sinner: he gets accustomed to all the appeals, and becomes gospel proof. Again, make haste—your salvation may become extremely difficult, if not altogether impossible. Man is a bundle of habit, and habit becomes second nature. You ask, "How long may a man live on in sin, and yet be saved?" I reply, Do not try the experiment—it is a very dangerous one. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Make haste, and learn that He has suffered for you what you deserved as a sinner, and obeyed for you what you owed as a creature. This may be your last opportunity. III. Look, now, at the last three words, and you will find our third head: "AND COME DOWN." Zaccheus was upon one of the many branches of the sycamore; and you, my unsaved friend, are upon one of the many branches of the great, mighty-spreading, world-embracing tree of human corruption, and I call upon you in the name of my Master to "come down." Now, I wish to be charitable, but I do solemnly declare that I cannot find the branch of atheism, even on the tree of human corruption. At all events, if there be such a branch, I hesitate not to say it is the rottenest one on the whole tree. Come down from it! Then there are other branches: scepticism, drunkenness, pride, &c. (*W. Anderson.*) *Effectual calling.*—1. Now, first, effectual calling is a VERY GRACIOUS TRUTH. You may guess this from the fact that Zaccheus was a character whom we should suppose the last to be saved. He belonged to a bad city—Jericho—a city which had been cursed, and no one would suspect that any one would come out of Jericho to be saved. Ah! my brethren, it matters not where you come from: you may come from one of the dirtiest streets, one of the worst back slums in London, but if effectual grace call you, it is an effectual call, which knoweth no distinction of place. But, my brethren, grace knows no distinction; it is no respecter of persons, but God calleth whom He wills, and He called this worst of publicans, in the worst of cities, from the worst of trades. Ah! many of you have climbed up the tree of your own good works, and perched yourselves in the branches of your holy actions, and are trusting in the free will of the poor creature, or resting in some worldly maxim; nevertheless, Christ looks up even to proud sinners, and calls them down. 2. Next it was a personal call. 3. It is a hastening call—"Zaccheus, make haste." God's grace always comes with despatch; and if thou art drawn by God, thou wilt run after God, and not be talking about delays. 4. Next, it is a humbling call. "Zaccheus, make haste and come down." God always humbles a sinner. Oh, thou that dwellest with the eagle on the craggy rock, thou shalt come down from thy elevation; thou shalt fall by grace, or thou shalt fall with a vengeance, one day. He "hath cast down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek." 5. Next, it is an affectionate call. "To-day I must abide in thy house." 6. Again, it was not only an affectionate call, but it was an abiding call. "To-day I must abide at thy house." When Christ speaks, He does not say, "Make haste, Zaccheus, and come down, for I am just coming to look in"; but "I must abide in thy house; I am coming to sit down to eat and drink with thee; I am coming to have a meal with thee." 7. It was also a necessary call. "I must abide." It is necessary that the child of God should be saved. I don't suppose it; I know it for a certainty. If God says "I must," there is no standing against it. Let Him say "must," and it must be. 8. And, now, lastly, this call was an effectual one, for we see the fruits it brought forth. Open was Zaccheus's door; spread was his table; generous was his heart; washed were his hands; unburdened was his conscience; joyful was his soul. Sinner, we shall know whether God calls you by this: if He calls, it will be an effectual call—not a call which you hear, and then forget, but one which produces good works. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) He was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.—*The sinner's Saviour*:—The old contempt of the sinner's Saviour lingers in

the world still. In one way or other the charge is repeated, that Christianity is too lenient to the sinner, that it tends to discourage the naturally amiable and virtuous, and looks too favourably upon the vicious and disreputable, &c. How easily could we turn the tables upon these slanderers, for usually those who talk thus have but a scanty supply of morals and virtues themselves. I. WE ADMIT THE TRUTH OF THE CHARGE. Jesus did go to be guest to a man that was a sinner, and did so not only once, but as often as He saw need. He went after the sheep which had gone astray, and He had a wonderful attraction for the disreputable classes. 1. The object of Christ, and the design of the gospel, is the saving of sinners. 2. Our Lord does actually call sinners into the fellowship of the gospel. 3. The man Christ Jesus does very readily come to be guest with a man who is a sinner, for He stands on no ceremony with sinners, but makes Himself at home with them at once. 4. Our Lord goes further, for He not only stands on no ceremony with sinners, but within a very little time He is using those very sinners who had been so unfit for any holy service—using them in His most hallowed work. Note how He makes Zaccheus to be His host. 5. Ay, and the Lord favoured Zaccheus, the sinner, by granting him that day full assurance of salvation. II. WE DENY THE INSINUATION WHICH IS COVERTLY INTENDED BY THE CHARGE brought against our Lord. Jesus is the friend of sinners, but not the friend of sin. 1. Christ was guest with a man that was a sinner, but He never flattered a sinner yet. 2. Neither does the Lord Jesus screen sinners from that proper and wholesome rebuke which virtue must always give to vice. 3. Again, it is not true, as I have heard some say, that the gospel makes pardon seem such a very easy thing, and therefore sin is thought to be a small matter. 4. Nor, though Christ be the friend of sinners, is it true that He makes men think lightly of personal character. 5. It has been said that if we tell men that good works cannot save them, but that Jesus saves the guilty who believe in Him, we take away all motives for morality and holiness. We meet that again by a direct denial: it is not so, we supply the grandest motive possible, and only remove a vicious and feeble motive. III. WE REJOICE IN THE VERY FACT WHICH HAS BEEN OBJECTED TO, that Jesus Christ comes to be guest with men who are sinners. 1. We rejoice in it, because it affords hope to ourselves. 2. We rejoice that it is true, because this affords us hope for all our fellow-men. 3. We rejoice that this is the fact, because when we are waiting for the Lord it cheers us up with the hope of fine recruits. I remember a sailor, who before conversion used to swear, and I warrant you he would rattle it out, volley after volley. He became converted, and when he prayed it was much in the same fashion. How he woke everybody up the first time he opened his mouth at the prayer-meeting! The conversion of a great sinner is the best medicine for a sick Church. (*Ibid.*) The half of my goods I give to the poor.—*Gifts to the poor*.—He gives half his goods to the poor. Was he under any obligation to do so? are we? Certainly not: nor to give half our time, or half our thought. But there have been men who have given the chief part of their time and thought to the poor: and as there are so many who give the poor none of their time, or thought, or money, is it not well that there should be a few otherwise minded? Is money more precious than time and thought that a man should not give that, if so inclined? Zaccheus was so inclined. And were a man in our day to spend half his fortune in promoting the comfort, education, health, virtue, and piety of the poor, would not his name be fragrant both in earth and heaven? But there are very many people who cannot give half their goods to the poor, for they have not as yet secured half enough for the wants of their own household. Let these, then, give time and thought. (*T. Lynch.*) *Doing good promptly*.—Zaccheus saith not, "I have given," as an upbraider of God; or, "I will give," as a delayer that means to give away his goods after his death, when he can keep them no longer; but he saith, "I give," to signify that his will is his deed, and that he meaneth not to take any days of payment for the matter; for as before he ran apace to see Christ, and came down hastily to entertain Christ in his own person, so doth he here give quickly to relieve Christ in his needy members. This is Zaccheus's last will and testament that he maketh before his death, and seeth the same proved and performed before his eyes. If, therefore, we desire to do any good to any of our poor brethren, let us learn of Zaccheus to do it quickly while we are alive, for time will prevent us, and death will prevent us. (*H. Smith.*) *I restore him fourfold*.—*The duty of restitution*.—I. THE FOUNDATION OF THIS DUTY. 1. The nature of justice, which consists in rendering to every one what belongs to him. 2. Holy Scripture (Exod. xxii.; Lev. vi.; Numb. v.). 3. Restitution is a duty so indispensable, that without it there is no salvation. Tell

me, can we be in a state of salvation, when we have no love to God, and no love to our neighbour? But the man who refuses to make restitution loves not God, for he despises His laws and tramples upon His authority; nor does he love his neighbour, for he voluntarily persists in wronging him, and withholding from him his rights. II. WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF THIS DUTY? 1. We must examine with care whether we have ever wronged our neighbour, and in how many modes we have done it. Allege not for your excuse, example, custom, the necessity of acting like others. All this is of no avail now in the sight of the Omniscient—will be of no avail hereafter at the bar of God. 2. Restitution should be prompt. "I will, at some future time, make restitution." But when? You as yet know not the time, and perhaps it may never arrive. 3. Restitution must be full and entire. Fearful lest he should not fully recompense them, his generous heart makes the resolution, and his piety is ready instantly to execute it. In view of this subject I remark—1. How small is the number of those who are saved! We know that thousands of frauds are daily committed, and yet how few acts of restitution do we witness! 2. What great discoveries shall be made at the day of judgment. 3. This subject teaches us the nature of true religion. It consists in benevolence to man as well as love to God, and assures us that without the former we can never exercise the latter. 4. This subject should lead us to avoid the very beginning of sin, and to pay the most scrupulous attention to the duties of truth and justice. Thus we shall be prevented from defrauding our fellow-men; thus, if necessity ever requires it, we shall be able easily to make full restitution. 5. Show by your conduct, ye who have in any degree defrauded your fellow-men, that you feel the force of conscience and the truth of God; imitate Zaccheus, and make restitution. (*S. K. Kolloch, M.A.*) *Restitution*:—The duty which the Christian world needs to learn over again, just now, is the duty of making restitution for wrong-doings. Shame is not enough; remorse is not enough; confession is not enough; there must also be restitution. It is a melancholy and mortifying fact, that we often meet with men of the world, making no claim to being religious, whose honour and integrity put to shame the hollow pretensions of nominal Christians. When the chief councillor of Sultan Selyms advised him to bestow the marvellous wealth which he had taken from the Persian merchants upon some charitable hospital, the dying Turk answered that God would never be pleased with such an offering, and commanded that the spoils should be restored to the owners. I. Restitution should be PROMPT. Dr. Finney, in his interesting autobiography, tells of a young woman, the only child of a widow, who once came to him in great distress. She had stolen, whenever she could, various trinkets, &c., from her schoolmates, and desired his advice as to what she ought to do. He told her that she must make restitution, and also confess her sin to those whom she had wronged. This, of course, was a great trial, but her repentance was so sincere, that she began at once to follow his advice. As she went on with the mortifying task, she remembered more and more; some persons to whom she made restitution saying, "She must be crazy, or a fool," while others were deeply touched. They all readily forgave her. The unhappy girl had stolen a shawl from Bishop Hobart's daughter, and when her spiritual adviser insisted on its being returned, she folded it in a paper, rung the bell at the bishop's door, and handed the parcel to the servant, without a word of explanation. Conscience whispered that she had not done her whole duty, and that somebody might be wrongfully suspected. She immediately went back to the house, and asked for the bishop. She was shown into his study, and told him all the truth. The good bishop, with all his impulsiveness and warmth of heart, wept aloud, and laying his hand on her head, prayed God to forgive her, as he did. Restitution was now made, and her peace was full and complete. The young woman became a devout Christian, adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour by a blameless, useful life, and, at a ripe old age, entered upon her everlasting inheritance. II. Restitution should not only be prompt, BUT FULL AND ENTIRE. Half-way measures will serve no good purpose. It would be as well to keep back the whole of ill-gotten gains, as a part. (*J. N. Norton, D.D.*) *The nature of restitution*:—I. For the act. Restitution is nothing else but the making reparation or satisfaction to another for the injuries we have done him. It is to restore a man to the good condition from which, contrary to right and to our duty, we have removed him. II. For the latitude and extent of the object, as I may call it, or THE MATTER ABOUT WHICH IT IS CONVERSANT. It extends to all kind of injuries, which may be reduced to these two heads; either we injure a person with or without his consent. 1. Some injuries are done to persons with their consent. Such are most

of those injuries which are done to the souls of men, when we command, or counsel, or encourage them to sin, or draw them in by our example. 2. Injuries are done to persons without their consent. And these, though they are not always the greatest mischiefs, yet they are the greatest injuries. And these injuries are done either by fraud and cunning, or by violence and oppression: either by overreaching another man in wit, or overbearing him by power. III. As to the manner how RESTITUTION IS TO BE MADE. 1. Thou art bound to do it voluntarily, and of thy own accord, though the person injured do not know who it was that did him the injury, though he do not seek reparation by law. 2. Thou must do it in kind, if the thing be capable of it, and the injured party demand it. Thou must restore the very thing which thou hadst deprived thy neighbour of, if it be such a thing as can be restored, and be still in thy power, unless he voluntarily accept of some other thing in exchange. 3. If thou canst not restore it in kind, thou art bound to restore it in value, in something that is as good. As for spiritual injuries done to the souls of men, we are bound to make such reparation and compensation as we can. Those whom we have drawn into sin, and engaged in wicked courses, by our influence and example, we are to endeavour by our instruction and counsel to reclaim them from those sins we led them into, and "to recover them out of the snare of the devil."

IV. AS TO THE MEASURE AND PROPORTION OF THE RESTITUTION WE ARE TO MAKE. Zaccheus here offers fourfold, which was much beyond what any law required in like cases. 1. Where restitution can be made in kind, or the injury can be certainly valued, we are to restore the thing or the value. 2. We are bound to restore the thing with the natural increase of it; that is, to satisfy for the loss sustained in the meantime, and the gain hindered. 3. Where the thing cannot be restored, and the value of it is not certain, we are to give reasonable satisfaction, that is, according to a middle estimation; not the highest nor the lowest of things of the kind. 4. We are at least to give by way of restitution what the law would give, for that is generally equal, and in most cases rather favourable than rigorous. 5. A man is not only bound to restitution for the injury which he did, but for all that directly follows upon his injurious act, though it were beyond his intention. (*Archbishop Tillotson.*) *On restitution:*—I shall speak to you at large concerning the necessity of restitution, and the obligations to it; because when this point is established, the performance of it speedily and completely will appear to be unquestionable parts of this duty. I say that we are obliged to restitution—first, as we are men, by the law of nature. It is an original law, graven on the hearts of all men, that every man ought to possess, and have the undisturbed use of his own proper goods. Now, can any acquisition, which was unjust in the moment wherein it was made, become just, and a man's rightful property, in succeeding moments? Can it be lawful to keep what it was unlawful to take? Therefore restitution is the only method by which these disorders can be repaired; and it is indispensably necessary on natural principles. But his natural honesty was further instructed on this point by the revealed law. Considered as a Jew, he was under an additional obligation by the law of Moses. For the Levitical law regulated exactly the proportions in which restitution was to be made in different cases; as, "five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep." To this argument may be added that which arises from the example of holy men under the Old Covenant, whose conscience would not suffer them to retain goods obtained unjustly, and who considered the law of restitution as sacred and inviolable. Among which examples, that of Samuel is remarkable, in the eleventh chapter of his first book: "And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I am old and grey-headed." Zaccheus thought himself bound to restitution on a third principle—as a penitent, by the conditions of repentance. There is, in one respect, a remarkable difference betwixt robbery and most other sins. The crime of the latter may pass away, and be cancelled, upon our sincere repentance, and prayers for the Divine forgiveness; but the crime of the former continues as long as we retain the fruits of it in our hands. Does any man think of presenting his robberies to God and to His Church? Many persons, I fear (in former times particularly), have sought to make this impious exchange, pretending to give unto God what they had stolen from their neighbour. Besides this general engagement to make restitution, as a penitent, by the conditions of repentance, Zaccheus found himself under a fourth—and that a particular obligation, derived from the nature of his occupation, as a publican; that is, a collector of the tribute which the Jews paid to the Romans. Thus it is, that a reformed Christian, or one converted to Christianity, must begin the exercise of his religion. And it is in this fifth view that I consider Zaccheus making restitution; namely, as a proselyte, or convert to

Jesus Christ. The Divine grace had now touched his heart, and inspired him with a resolution to break those bonds of iniquity in which he had been holden, and to qualify himself for that forgiveness which Christ offers to sinners only on this condition. Enough has been said, I trust, to show the necessity of restitution. A few words will be sufficient to show that it ought to be performed speedily and completely. I am willing (says one) to restore even at present; but I must be allowed to compound the matter: I cannot resign the whole, but I am ready to give up a part. This is the last mistake and fault which the example of Zaccheus condemns and corrects, when he declares, "I restore fourfold." Now, this surplus, is it justice, or liberality? It partakes of both. For it is just to restore beyond the exact amount; because, besides the lawful interest of his money which our neighbour has been deprived of, every robbery occasions some inconvenience and detriment that cannot be completely repaired by a mere restitution of the things taken. It is better, therefore, to exceed than fall short. (*S. Partridge, M.A.*) *Restitution must be made.*—Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been sent to Washington during the past few years as "conscience money." I suppose that money was sent by men who wanted to be Christians, but found they could not until they made restitution. There is no need of our trying to come to Christ as long as we keep fraudulently a dollar or a farthing in our possession that belongs to another. Suppose you have not money enough to pay your debts, and, for the sake of defrauding your creditors, you put your property in your wife's name. You might cry until the day of judgment for pardon, but you would not get it without first making restitution. In times of prosperity it is right, against a rainy day, to assign property to your wife; but if, in time of perplexity, and for the sake of defrauding your creditors, you make such assignment, you become a culprit before God, and may as well stop praying until you have made restitution. Or suppose one man loans another money on bonds and mortgage, with the understanding that the mortgage can lie quiet for several years, but as soon as the mortgage is given, commences foreclosure—the sheriff mounts the auction-block, and the property is struck down at half-price, and the mortgagee buys it in. The mortgagee started to get the property at half-price, and is a thief and a robber. Until he makes restitution, there is no mercy for him. Suppose you sell goods by a sample, and then afterward send to your customer an inferior quality of goods. You have committed a fraud, and there is no mercy for you until you have made restitution. Suppose you sell a man a handkerchief for silk, telling him it is all silk, and it is part cotton. No mercy for you until you have made restitution. Suppose you sell a man a horse, saying he is sound, and he afterward turns out to be spavined and balky. No mercy for you until you have made restitution. (*De W. Talmage, D.D.*) *Restitution.*—The Rev. B. Sawday was about eighteen years since in the well-known establishment of Messrs. Hitchcock, St. Paul's Churchyard. A silver watch was stolen from his bedroom, and no trace could be discovered of the missing property. Ten years passed away. About four years since he preached a startling discourse upon repentance and restitution. His words evidently made a deep impression upon the hearers. During the ensuing week a young man came up to Mr. Sawday requesting an interview. In a few words the young man said, "It was I who stole your watch, some years since, at Messrs. Hitchcock's. I am very sorry, and I am deeply anxious to settle the matter. Here, I'll give you £10 to square it. I was passing your chapel last Sunday, and saw your name; I thought I would go in and hear you, and your sermon broke me all to pieces; I have been wretched and miserable ever since." "Thank God!" said Mr. Sawday. "No," he added, "I cannot take £10; the watch was only worth £4: I'll take that; but I'm far more anxious that you should confess your sin to God, and obtain His pardon and grace." "That," quietly added the man, "I have sought, and I believe obtained." One of Mr. Sawday's deacons was greatly troubled about the very plain speech of the pastor in regard to this very address, and expressed his fear that such preaching would drive people away from the chapel. The good man, however, was silenced by the sequel. (*Henry Varley.*) *Restitution necessary to peace.*—Some years ago, in the north of England, a woman came to one of the meetings, and appeared to be very anxious about her soul. For some time she did not seem to be able to get peace. The truth was, she was covering up one thing she was not willing to confess. At last the burden was too great; and she said to a worker, "I never go down on my knees to pray, but a few bottles of wine keep coming up before my mind." It appeared that, years before, when she was house-keeper, she had taken some bottles of wine belonging to her employer. The worker

said: "Why do you not make restitution?" The woman replied that the man was dead; and besides, she did not know how much it was worth. "Are there any heirs living to whom you can make restitution?" She said there was a son living at some distance; but she thought it would be a very humiliating thing, so she kept back for some time. At last she felt as if she must have a clear conscience at any cost; so she took the train, and went to the place where the son of her employer resided. She took five pounds with her; she did not know exactly what the wine was worth, but that would cover it, at any rate. The man said he did not want the money; but she replied, "I do not want it; it has burnt my pocket long enough." (*D. L. Moody.*)

Evidences of true conversion:—I. When the gospel is cordially received and fully embraced, it subdues a man's ruling sin. II. Evidence of Christian character is to be sought, not so much in what a man says, as in what he does. III. On the disposal of property, there is a wide difference between the opinions of men and the instructions of Jesus Christ. (*Chas. Walker.*)

Triumph over hindrances:—I. THE HINDRANCES OF ZACCHÆUS were twofold: partly circumstantial—partly personal. Partly circumstantial, arising from his riches and his profession of a publican. Now the publican's profession exposed him to temptations in these three ways. First of all in the way of opportunity. A publican was a gatherer of the Roman public imposts. Not, however, as now, when all is fixed, and the government pays the gatherer of the taxes. The Roman publican paid so much to the government for the privilege of collecting them; and then indemnified himself, and appropriated what overplus he could, from the taxes which he gathered. There was, therefore, evidently a temptation to overcharge, and a temptation to oppress. To overcharge, because the only redress the payer of the taxes had was an appeal to law, in which his chance was small before a tribunal where the judge was a Roman, and the accuser an official of the Roman government. A temptation to oppress, because the threat of law was nearly certain to extort a bribe. Besides this, most of us must have remarked that a certain harshness of manner is contracted by those who have the rule over the poor. They come in contact with human souls only in the way of business. They have to do with their ignorance, their stupidity, their attempts to deceive; and hence the tenderest-hearted men become impatient and apparently unfeeling. Another temptation was presented: to live satisfied with a low morality. The standard of right and wrong is eternal in the heavens—unchangeably one and the same. But here on earth it is perpetually variable—it is one in one age or nation, another in another. Every profession has its conventional morality, current nowhere else. Among publicans the standard would certainly be very low. Again, Zacchæus was tempted to that hardness in evil which comes from having no character to support. The personal hindrance to a religious life lay in the recollection of past guilt. Zacchæus had done wrong, and no fourfold restitution will undo that, where only remorse exists. II. Pass we on to THE TRIUMPH OVER DIFFICULTIES. In this there is man's part, and God's part. Man's part in Zacchæus' case was exhibited in the discovery of expedients. The Redeemer came to Jericho, and Zacchæus desired to see that blessed Countenance, whose very looks, he was told, shed peace upon restless spirits and fevered hearts. But Zacchæus was small of stature, and a crowd surrounded Him. Therefore he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore-tree. You must not look on this as a mere act of curiosity. They who thronged the steps of Jesus were a crowd formed of different materials from the crowd which would have been found in the amphitheatre. He was there as a religious Teacher or Prophet; and they who took pains to see Him, at least were the men who looked for salvation in Israel. This, therefore, was a religious act. Then note further, the expedients adopted by Zacchæus after he had seen and heard Jesus. The tendency to the hardness and selfishness of riches he checked by a rule of giving half away. The tendency to extortion he met by fastening on himself the recollection, that when the hot moment of temptation had passed away, he would be severely dealt with before the tribunal of his own conscience, and unrelentingly sentenced to restore fourfold. God's part in this triumph over difficulties is exhibited in the address of Jesus: "Zacchæus, make haste and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house." Two things we note here: invitation and sympathy. Invitation—"come down." Say what we will of Zacchæus seeking Jesus, the truth is Jesus was seeking Zacchæus. For what other reason but the will of God had Jesus come to Jericho, but to seek Zacchæus and such as he? We do not seek God—God seeks us. There is a Spirit pervading time and space who seek the souls of men. At last the seeking becomes reciprocal—the Divine Presence

is felt afar, and the soul begins to turn towards it. Then when we begin to seek God, we become conscious that God is seeking us. It is at that period that we distinguish the voice of personal invitation—"Zaccheus!" Lastly, the Divine part was done in sympathy. By sympathy we commonly mean little more than condolence. If the tear start readily at the voice of grief, and the purse-strings open at the accents of distress, we talk of a man's having great sympathy. To weep with those who weep—common sympathy does not mean much more. The sympathy of Christ was something different from this. Sympathy to this extent, no doubt, Zaccheus could already command. If Zaccheus were sick, even a Pharisee would have given him medicine. If Zaccheus had been in need, a Jew would not have scrupled to bestow an alms. If Zaccheus had been bereaved, many even of that crowd that murmured when they saw him treated by Christ like a son of Abraham, would have given to his sorrow the tribute of a sigh. The sympathy of Jesus was fellow-feeling for all that is human. He did not condole with Zaccheus upon his trials—He did not talk to him "about his soul," He did not preach to him about his sins, He did not force His way into his house to lecture him—He simply said, "I will abide at thy house:" thereby identifying himself with a publican, thereby acknowledging a publican for a brother. Zaccheus a publican? Zaccheus a sinner? Yes; but Zaccheus is a man. His heart throbs at cutting words. He has a sense of human honour. He feels the burning shame of the world's disgrace. Lost? Yes, but the Son of Man, with the blood of the human race in His veins, is a Brother to the lost. (F. W. Robertson, M.A.)

Conscience money:—A remarkable case of conscience money, which has just come to light, is just now puzzling an excellent secular contemporary. It appears that fifteen years ago, the London General Omnibus Company had in their employ a conductor who, during his twelve months' service, received £10 more than he paid in. He now writes to the company stating this, and that his conscience now prompted him to make restitution, together with interest for the whole intervening period—amounting in all to £13 15s. Towards this he sends £5 on account. The point that troubles our contemporary is the fact that conscience should slumber fifteen years "and then wake up again;" but we have no doubt that many of our readers will find a solution in the Scriptures. No doubt the Spirit of God had been at work. A similar case was that of Zaccheus, and how many years back he went when he made restitution, who can tell?

Restitution:—A little Kaffir girl in South Africa came one day to the missionary and brought four sixpences, saying, "This money is yours." "No," said the missionary, "it is not mine." "Yes," persisted the little black girl, "you must take it. At the examination of the school you gave me a sixpence as a prize for good writing; but the writing was not mine, I got some one else to do it for me. So here are four sixpences." She had read the story of Zaccheus in Luke xix., and "went and did likewise." How much better was this than hiding her sin would have been! After a searching address by Mr. Moody, he next day received a check for £100, being fourfold the amount of which the sender had wronged an individual.

Restitution a fruit of faith:—A young man was converted at a meeting in an opera-house in America. He thereupon confessed that he had been a professional gambler, and that he was then a fugitive from justice for a forgery. When he found Christ, some, who saw that he was a man of more than ordinary ability, advised him to take part publicly in Christian work; but he replied that he felt work of a different kind was first required from him. He meant restitution of the monies that he had fraudulently obtained. Finding a situation with a Christian employer, he told him all, and willingly undertook hard manual labour, to which he was quite unaccustomed, until his fidelity and quickness obtained for him a more suitable place. Spending as little as possible upon himself, he put by every dollar that he earned, until, after long perseverance, he had paid back the large sum which he had wrongfully taken, with the legal interest. Years afterwards he was described as "actively engaged in the service of Christ with a love that never tires and a zeal that never flags."

Restitution as proof of repentance:—An extensive hardware merchant in one of the Fulton Street prayer-meetings in New York appealed to his brother merchants to have the same religion for "down-town" as they had for "up-town"; for the week-day as for the Sabbath; for the counting-house as for the communion-table. After the meeting a manufacturer with whom he had dealt largely accosted him. "You did not know," said he, "that I was at the meeting and heard your remarks. I have for the last five years been in the habit of charging you more for goods than other purchasers. I want you to take your books, and charge back to me so much

per cent. on every bill of goods you have had of me for the past five years." A few days later the same hardware merchant had occasion to acknowledge the payment of a debt of several hundred dollars which had been due for twenty-eight years from a man who could as easily have paid it twenty-four years before. (*Family Treasury*.) This day is salvation come to this house.—*Zaccheus saved*:—I. We here notice, first of all, the SECRET PURPOSE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST TOWARDS THE PUBLICAN, ZACCHEUS. That Christ entertained towards him a secret purpose of mercy, compassion, and love, there can be no doubt whatever; the salutation, as well as the event, proved it. Electing grace had reached forth the golden sceptre towards the publican, long before "Jesus entered and passed through" the streets of Jericho. II. The narrative suggests to us another important particular, and it is this: THAT WITH THE SECRET PURPOSES OF DIVINE GRACE TOWARDS ZACCHEUS, THERE WAS CONNECTED AN OVERRULING OF CIRCUMSTANCES, FAVOURING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THOSE GRACIOUS PURPOSES. When Jesus arrived at Jericho, Zaccheus might have been elsewhere—might have been far distant, and out of the reach of that voice which spake so tenderly, and away from the glance of that eye which gazed so kindly on him. Moreover, even if present with the multitudes, he might have been so indifferent, and so absorbed by other objects of pursuit, as to entertain no desire towards the stranger, who had conceived so gracious a purpose towards him. But as Jesus passed through Jericho, Zaccheus was on the spot, anxious to see Him, and ready to heed His words. How was this? No such thing as accident. God was working out His own purpose toward him by His own secret agency. III. There remains another particular in the narrative, which must not be lost sight of. No sooner had the Lord Jesus said to him, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house"; than "HE MADE HASTE, AND CAME DOWN, AND RECEIVED HIM JOYFULLY." Does not all this indicate preparedness of mind? Is not the fact a living commentary on the doctrine—"Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power"? The currents of Divine mercy, grace, and love were then opening fully, and flowing abundantly towards him; and He, in whose hands are the hearts of all living men, prepared him to receive with gladness, as an honoured guest, that mighty One, "whose own arm brought salvation," and who came in all His energy, power, and love, "to seek and to save the lost," even the lost Zaccheus. (*G. Fisk, LL.B.*) The conversion of Zaccheus.—I. We think that it must be obvious THAT IMPEDIMENTS LIE IN THE WAY OF EVERY MAN'S CONVERSION—impediments in the way of his conversion, and yet impediments that are perfectly distinct from each other: as distinct as men's circumstances are from each other. You shall find that the impediment to one man's conversion is his education; you shall find that the impediment in another man's way is the peculiar circumstances in which he is placed; you shall find that the impediment to a third man's conversion is simply a natural impediment; you shall find that the impediment that lies in the way of another man's conversion is simply the example to which he is perpetually subject. All these things, so to speak, put the different individuals in a false position. They in all probability wish to be God's servants, nevertheless things there are which prevent them from being God's servants, and it is by the steady overcoming of these difficulties that God for ever shows the omnipotence of His grace. Now when we come to look to the immediate history before us, we shall find that these impediments were of a twofold description. The first of these impediments arose out of the man's circumstances, and the second of these impediments arose out of the man's occupation. II. Consider now some of the ANTECEDENTS to HIS CONVERSION. We may have oftentimes observed, at least if we have proceeded far in the consideration of human character, that with most men there are soft spots in their character. You will find it, indeed, impossible to meet with any character that is not accessible through some avenue and approachable by some peculiar circumstance in that character. It is not the fact that every man is wrapped up in induracy and in obduracy. You shall find that now and again there will come back out of the deep darkness that which tells you there is a spot there if you only knew how to reach it. It is like standing in the midst of some of those volcanic regions. All about you looks to be nothing but the hardness and the ruggedness of rock itself, but there are jets of flame and puffs of smoke that come up which tell you that there is volcanic action underneath. You shall find in most men's character there is something of this kind—things that tell you this, that possibly, if only means were used, they are not irreclaimably hopeless; and it is these things we venture to call the antecedents of a man's state of conversion. Now let us bring this explana-

tion to bear upon the case before us, and ask ourselves what antecedents there were in the case of Zaccheus the publican. I turn your attention, in the first place, to the marvellous charity of the man. "The half of my goods I give to the poor." I conceive it to be a mistake to suppose that this is expressed as being the fruit of the man's conversion. We hold it to be the revelation of his very publican life. It is a sort of exculpation of himself against those who said, "He is a publican." He was one of those men that could not see his brother have need without sharing his means with him, ay, up to the very moiety of his fortune—"The half of my goods I give to the poor." We turn to another feature in this man's antecedents. We are not now looking to his temper of charity, but we are looking to his temper of equity. "The half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." The law of Moses simply required this amount of restitution—the restitution of the principal, with one-fifth added by way of interest; but this man transcended this rule. "If I have taken anything from any man, . . . I restore him fourfold." Why? Not because the law compelled it; not because custom compelled it; not, in all probability, because ostentation dictated it; but simply because there was a high, strong sense of equity in this man's soul, that compelled him to this restoring or restituting that which he had unjustly taken. Now, we hold it is marvellous to find all this in a character, and in the midst of circumstances such as the publican's were in those days—marvellous to find charity in them—still more marvellous to find equity. It is a something, because it is a something telling us this—that there is a soft part still in this man's soul—a point on which you might rest your apparatus for effecting this man's conversion. There was a deep sense of charity, in the first place, and there was the ample recognition of the duty of equity in the second place. What are we to know and what are we to understand in this? Why, we ask you to look round to the world in our better and our more enlightened days. Can we find much that looks like a parody to it? You shall find and know something, perhaps, of the tricks of commerce, and of the ungodliness of trade; but you seldom hear anything of the fourfold restitution. You shall hear, in all probability, of hard bargains being driven—of the simplicity of unwary customers being taken advantage of—of the adroitness of men of wealth practising upon the ignorance of men of poverty; and you shall find, perhaps, that these successful tacticians wrap themselves in the congratulation of their successful doings; but you shall never hear of the fourfold restitution. No, even in our better days the privileged Christian is beaten by the despised publican. III. We have but one thought more to throw before you. We have looked at the man's impediments, and we have looked at the man's antecedents; in the last place, we have to look to THE MANNER OF THE CONVERSION OF ZACCHEUS THE PUBLICAN. Now there is nothing more certain, as we have said before, than that none of these antecedents could have been the parent of Zaccheus's conversion. There may be, as we have said before, differences of experience upon the road, but that it does not lead to the same termination is, if Scripture be true, an utter impossibility. The Scripture has said, "No man cometh to the Father but by Me." The Scripture has said it, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, He is none of His." The Bible has said it, "We must be found in Him, not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith." And none of these up to this moment had Zaccheus the publican. A man of moral propriety, and a man of promising indications he may have been, but as yet outside of the field of conversion. We may, then, ask ourselves the question, how it is that this missing element was to be supplied. We answer, that his conversion went upon these two principles: that Christ sought him, and that Christ spake to him; and that those two things must be fulfilled in every man who is to be truly a believing child of Abraham—the Saviour must come, and the Saviour must speak to him. (*A. Boyd.*) *A household blessing*.—I. THE BLESSING OF SALVATION. 1. Zaccheus now had heavenly riches. 2. Zaccheus had now the highest distinction. A Christian. 3. The home of Zaccheus was now sanctified. II. THE AUTHOR OF SALVATION. 1. Salvation is Christ's alone to give. 2. The guiltiest are sometimes the first to be saved. (1) This is for our warning. Beware of pride, self-righteousness, assumed morality, ostentation, carnal wisdom, and deep rooted prejudice. These are the offensive things that make him pass by your door. Remove them quickly, lest you perish a Christless soul! (2) This visit to the guiltiest is also for our encouragement. Satan has two grand devices, presumption and despair. Avoid the former, and do not be crushed by the latter.

This man had been so radically bad, but was saved. Let this sustain and strengthen the deep-stained sinner who cries for mercy. III. THE MEANS OF SALVATION. 1. Zaccheus used the likeliest means to know more of Christ. 2. He strove through difficulties to obtain the object of his desire. IV. THE SIGNS OF SALVATION. 1. Joy. 2. Rectitude. 3. Benevolence. (*The Congregational Pulpit.*) *Salvation in the house*:—I want you to learn some lessons from this story of Zaccheus. 1. That Jesus will come home with you and bring salvation to your house if you are anxious, as Zaccheus was, to see Him. Zaccheus was a small man among many great men, and so he could not see the Lord till he climbed; let this teach you not to be discouraged because you are small in the world's eyes, poor, humble, or ignorant. You, like the publican, must climb if you would see Jesus, you must climb by prayer, by the study of your Bible, by Holy Communion, by conquest of yourselves—these are all branches of the Tree of Life; if you climb by these you will see Jesus. Learn also that Jesus will come to you and bring salvation to your house, however poor it may be. He who lay in the manger at Bethlehem does not look for soft raiment and luxurious bedding. 2. When Jesus comes to your house He will bring gifts with Him: He will work miracles for you. It has been said that the age of miracles is gone, it has in one sense only. Jesus will work miracles of mercy in your house. He will give you, too, a new name when He comes to your house. You know that old families are proud of the name which their ancestors have borne for generations, but after all, the best of names is that which your Saviour will give you, the name of a son of God, a child of Christ. And He will give you more than a name, He will give you landed property, even if you are so poor that a back-yard is all you have to look out upon. He will give you, who perhaps never heard of an estate in fee-simple, or knew what it was to have a house of your own, an inheritance, a place of many mansions, a house eternal in heaven. And He will give you clothing, the very best of clothing. To every one of you who have Jesus in the house, and who have often had to patch and cut and contrive to clothe yourself and your family, He will give a white robe of righteousness. (*H. J. Wilmot Buxton, M.A.*) *Salvation for Zaccheus*:—"Salvation! How? where? What does Christ mean when He says, 'Salvation has come to this house'? Did He preach 'the way of salvation'? If so, we should like to hear what He said." Well, He said this:—That the Son of Man had found the Son of Abraham, acknowledged him as such, and would make it well with him. And was it not salvation from anger, and sorrow, and hardness of heart, to be thus acknowledged? Men of Jericho, this is a son of Abraham; your blessing is his. Society may reject him; but the God of Abraham accepts him. The sons of Abraham may ban one another; but the Son of Man will bless them all. "Son of Man" is a wider and deeper title than "son of Abraham." The Son of Man's love includes all Jews, because it extends beyond them all. Christ acknowledged Zaccheus in a way very comforting to his Jewish and his human heart. But this was the salvation—the creation of a living bond of affection between Zaccheus and that Holy Love in whose presence he stood. In this Presence Zaccheus felt at once that he grew purer, happier, stronger for good, forgiving to those who had despised him, and humble and thankful in that sense of forgiving confidence which Christ's whole manner towards him breathed. When Christ spoke of "salvation," then, He was Himself the salvation of which He spoke. (*T. T. Lynch.*) To seek and to save that which was lost.—*The seeking Saviour*:—Good news from a far country. By meditation on this statement we are led to consider—I. THE MISSION OF CHRIST. "The Son of Man is come." Predicted in the oracles of God by Balaam, Isaiah, Zechariah, &c. II. THE PURPOSE OF HIS MISSION. "To seek and to save." 1. It was not an experimental gratification. 2. Not to gain a fair reputation. 3. Not to obtain honour. III. THE OBJECT OF HIS LOVE. "That which was lost." The whole world. Every Son of Adam. APPLICATION: The text displays—1. The spirit of self-denial. 2. The spirit of love. (*F. G. Davis.*) *Redemption*:—We are redeemed—1. From the power of the grave. 2. From the power of sin. 3. From the curse of the law. (*E. Hicks, M.A.*) *Christ's estimate of sin*:—There are two ways of looking at sin:—One is the severe view: it makes no allowance for frailty—it will not hear of temptation, nor distinguish between circumstances. Men who judge in this way shut their eyes to all but two objects—a plain law, and a transgression of that law. There is no more to be said: let the law take its course. Now if this be the right view of sin, there is abundance of room left for admiring what is good and honourable and upright: there is positively no room provided for restoration. Happy if you have done well;

but if ill, then nothing is before you but judgment and fiery indignation. The other view is one of laxity and false liberalism. When such men speak, prepare yourself to hear liberal judgments and lenient ones: a great deal about human weakness, error in judgment, mistakes, an unfortunate constitution, on which the chief blame of sin is to rest—a good heart. All well if we wanted, in this mysterious struggle of a life, only consolation. But we want far beyond comfort—goodness; and to be merely made easy when we have done wrong will not help us to *that*! Distinct from both of these was Christ's view of guilt. His standard of right was high—higher than ever man had placed it before. Not moral excellence, but heavenly, He demanded. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Read the Sermon on the Mount. It tells of a purity as of snow resting on an Alpine pinnacle, white in the blue holiness of heaven; and yet also, He the All-pure had tenderness for what was not pure. He who stood in Divine uprightness that never faltered, felt compassion for the ruined, and infinite gentleness for human fall. Broken, disappointed, doubting hearts, in dismay and bewilderment, never looked in vain to Him. Purity attracting evil: that was the wonder. I see here three peculiarities, distinguishing Christ from ordinary men.

I. A PECULIARITY IN THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REDEEMER'S MORAL NATURE. Manifested in that peculiar title which He assumed—the Son of Man. Let us see what that implies. 1. It implies fairly His Divine origin; for it is an emphatic expression, and as we may so say, an unnatural one. None could without presumption remind men that He was their Brother and a Son of Man, except One who was also something higher, even the Son of God. 2. It implies the catholicity of His brotherhood. He is emphatically the Son of *Man*. Out of this arose two powers of His sacred humanity—the universality of His sympathies, and their intense particular personality. What was His mode of sympathy with men? He did not sit down to philosophize about the progress of the species, or dream about a millennium. He gathered round Him twelve men. He formed one friendship, special, concentrated, deep. He did not give Himself out as the leader of the publican's cause, or the champion of the rights of the dangerous classes; but He associated with Himself Matthew, a publican called from the detested receipt of custom. He went into the house of Zaccheus, and treated him like a fellow-creature—a brother, and a son of Abraham. His catholicity or philanthropy was not an abstraction, but an aggregate of personal attachments.

II. PECULIARITY IN THE OBJECTS OF CHRIST'S SOLICITUDE. He had come to seek and to save the "lost." The world is lost, and Christ came to save the world. But by the lost in this place He does not mean the world; He means a special class, lost in a more than common sense, as sheep are lost which have strayed from the flock, and wandered far beyond all their fellows scattered in the wilderness. Not half a century ago a great man was seen stooping and working in a charnel-house of bones. Uncouth, nameless fragments lay around him, which the workmen had dug up and thrown aside as rubbish. They belonged to some far-back age, and no man knew what they were or whence. Few men cared. The world was merry at the sight of a philosopher groping among mouldy bones. But when that creative mind, reverently discerning the fontal types of living being in diverse shapes, brought together those strange fragments, bone to bone, and rib to claw, and tooth to its own corresponding vertebra, recombining the wondrous forms of past ages, and presenting each to the astonished world as it moved and lived a hundred thousand ages back, then men began to perceive that a new science had begun on earth. And such was the work of Christ. They saw Him at work among the fragments and mouldering wreck of our humanity and sneered. But He took the dry bones such as Ezekiel saw in vision, which no man thought could live, and He breathed into them the breath of life.

III. A PECULIARITY IN HIS MODE OF TREATMENT. How were these lost ones to be restored? The human plans are reducible to three—chastisement, banishment, and indiscriminate lenity. In Christ's treatment of guilt we find three peculiarities—sympathy, holiness, firmness. 1. By human sympathy. In the treatment of Zaccheus this was almost all. We read of almost nothing else as the instrument of that wonderful reclamation. One thing only, Christ went to his house self-invited. But that one was everything. 2. By the exhibition of Divine holiness. The holiness of Christ differed from all earthly, common, vulgar holiness. Wherever it was, it elicited a sense of sinfulness and imperfection. Just as the purest cut crystal of the rock looks dim beside the diamond, so the best men felt a sense of guilt growing distinct upon their souls (Luke v. 8). But at the same time

the holiness of Christ did not awe men away from Him, nor repel them. It inspired them with hope. 3. By firmness. (*F. W. Robertson, M.A.*) *Christ seeking and saving the lost*.—I. LET ME BRING BEFORE YOU THE INTERESTING STATEMENT OF OUR TEXT. 1. The "lost," then, are the objects of His care and love. There are two ideas comprehended in the expression. When Christ would illustrate the condition of those who were lost, on one occasion, He selected three objects: a sheep—money—and a prodigal (Luke xv.). One of these could only be lost in the sense of its owner being deprived of its use. Having no consciousness, the evil of its being mislaid fell upon the "woman." But the other two being lost, suffered or were exposed to evil of their own, as well as occasioned evil to those to whom they belonged or were related. The loss of the "sheep" included danger and trouble to itself, as well as anxiety and deprivation to its possessor; the loss of the "prodigal" entailed distrust and shame upon himself, as well as affliction on his "father's house." And these are the most fitting and forcible symbols of the sinner's case. Lost to God and lost to himself. 2. Man, thus lost, thus spiritually lost—lost to God, and to himself, is the object of Christ's care. He loves us in our weakness, and worldliness, in "our crimes and our carnality." He proposes our salvation to bring us back to God, to bestow His knowledge, love, and image. Let it be remembered, however, that Christ's chief aim is to secure inward and individual salvation. Whatever may be done for a man is very little while he is lost, in reference to the highest things; you cannot save him, unless you convert him. 3. Christ "seeks" to "save." He goes in quest of men. He had His eye on Zaccheus when he visited the sycamore tree—His "delights were" at the work ere His charity had utterance there. He knew where the objects of His pity were to be found, and directed His course and shaped His plans that He might meet with them. 4. Once more. Christ not only proposes the good of the "lost," even their "salvation," and "seeks" them for this purpose, but "He is come" to do it. What He did on earth—His life and labours and sufferings and death; what He does in heaven, by the agency of men, the ministry of Providence, the operations of the Holy Spirit, are all to be considered in relation to His coming hither—the fact, the manner, and the meaning of His advent. II. CONSIDER SOME IMPORTANT BEARINGS OF THE STATEMENT NOW ILLUSTRATED. 1. You have in our subject an evidence of our religion—the religion of "the Son of man." Think of His object, principle, and method, and say whether, in the circumstances of the case, they do not necessarily indicate one come from God? There were no materials in that "half-barbarous nation in wholly barbarous times" out of which could have been formed the living "Son of man," and no materials out of which His image could have been formed. He must have been, or none could have conceived of Him; and if He were, He must have been from heaven. 2. You have in our subject a beautiful model of Christian life and labour. What Christ was, we should be. 3. You have in our subject matter for the serious consideration of unconverted men. Christ came to seek and to save men—came to seek and to save you. Are you conscious of your lost condition and bitterly bewailing it? It will be always true that salvation was possible, was presented, was pressed! And this increases your doom. (*A. J. Morris.*) *Persistent search*.—Our sympathies are already aroused when we see anything that is lost. Even a dog that has wandered away from its master, we feel sorry for; or a bird that has escaped from its owner, we say: "Poor thing!" Going down the street near nightfall, in the teeth of the sharp north-west wind, you feel very pitiful for one who has to be out to-night. As you go along, you hear the affrighted cry of a child. You stop. You say: "What is the matter?" You go up and find that a little one has lost its way from home. In its excitement it cannot even tell its name or its residence. The group of people gathered around are all touched, all sympathetic, all helpful. A plain body comes up, and with her plaid she wraps the child, and says: "I'll take care of the poor bairn!" While in the same street, but a little way off, the crier goes through the city, ringing a bell and uttering in a voice that sounds dolefully through all the alleys and by-ways of the city: "A lost child! three years of age, blue eyes, light hair. Lost child!" Did you ever hear any such pathos as that ringing through the darkness? You are going down the street and you see a man that you know very well. You once associated with him. You are astonished as you see him. "Why," you say, "he is all covered with the marks of sin. He must be in the very last stages of wickedness." And then you think of his lost home, and say: "God, pity his wife and child! God, pity him." A lost man! Under the gas-light you see a painted thing floating down the street—once the joy of a village

home—her laughter ringing horror through the souls of the pure, and rousing up the merriment of those already lost like herself. She has forgotten the home of her youth and the covenant of her God. A lost woman! But, my friend, we are all lost. 1. In the first place, I remark that we are lost to holiness. Are you not all willing to take the Bible announcement that our nature is utterly ruined? Sin has broken in at every part of the castle. One would think that we got enough of it from our parents whether they were pious or not; but we have taken the capital of sin with which our fathers and mothers started us, and we have by accumulation, as by infernal compound-interest, made it enough to swamp us for ever. The ivory palace of the soul polluted with the filthy feet of all uncleanness. The Lord Jesus Christ comes to bring us back to holiness. He comes not to destroy us, but to take the consequences of our guilt. 2. We are lost to happiness, and Christ comes to find us. A caliph said: "I have been fifty years a caliph, and I have had all honours and all wealth, and yet in the fifty years I can count up only fourteen days of happiness." How many there are in this audience who cannot count fourteen days in all their life in which they had no vexations or annoyances. We all feel a capacity for happiness that has never been tested. There are interludes of bliss, but whose entire life has been a continuous satisfaction? Why is it that most of the fine poems of the world are somehow descriptive of grief? It is because men know more about sorrow than they do about joy. Oh, ye who are struck through with unrest, Christ comes to-day to give you rest. If Christ comes to you, you will be independent of all worldly considerations. It was so with the Christian man who suffered for his faith, and was thrust down into the coal-hole of the Bishop of London. He said: "We have had fine times here, singing glad-some songs the night long. O God, forgive me for being so unworthy of this glory." More joyful in the hour of suffering and martyrdom was Rose Allen. When the persecutor put a candle under her wrist, and held it there until the sinews snapped, she said: "If you see fit you can burn my feet next, and then also my head." Christ once having taken you into His custody and guardianship, you can laugh at pain, and persecution, and trial. Great peace for all those whom Christ has found and who have found Christ. Jesus comes into their sick room. The nurse may have fallen asleep in the latter watches of the night; but Jesus watches with slumberless eyes, and He puts His gentle hand over the hot brow of the patient, and says: "You will not always be sick. I will not leave you. There is a land where the inhabitant never saith, 'I am sick.' Hush, troubled soul! Peace!" 3. Again, I remark that we are lost to heaven, and Christ comes to take us there. Christ comes to take the discord out of your soul and string it with a heavenly attuning. He comes to take out that from us which makes us unlike heaven, and substitute that which assimilates us. In conclusion: You may hide away from Him; but there are some things which will find you, whether Christ by His grace finds you or not. Trouble will find you; temptation will find you; sickness will find you; death will find you; the judgment will find you; eternity will find you. (*De W. Talmage, D.D.*) *Christ's mission*:—I. These precious words of the blessed Saviour describe an ADVENT, a COMING, AS ACCOMPLISHED. He has come. It is the statement of a past event, an event which has changed the whole current of human history. Its force lay in the great purpose for which it was undertaken. He did not drop into the world. He was not born as animals are. He came. He chose to come. He planned a coming, which He executed. All that philosophy can perceive, or poetry conceive, of grandeur of emprise, of Divine philanthropy, and of glorious endeavour, are in the enterprise of Jesus. Consider what He left in order to endure the incarnation necessary for the accomplishment of His most transcendent undertaking. He came from other heavens that were glorious places, whose population was not lost, where the kingdom of God was established, and where His will was done. No moral darkness and confusion were there. Think of the world to which He came. It is a planet of wonderful adaptabilities, and inhabited by a race of still more wonderful capabilities. As king of the kingdom of God, to Jesus order is of the highest consequence. He is the author of harmony. How disorderly was the world to which He came! Every man and woman and child frantically or persistently struggling to break themselves from the moral law, which is a cord of love, having lost much of what would seem to be a natural sense of the beauty of holiness, gone so far as to give the name of virtue to that kind of brute bravery which meets a wild beast in an amphitheatre very much on the beast's own level; a world full of sin, and full of the anguish and degradation of sin, where He could not turn His eyes without beholding a wrong or a sufferer?

Above all, He knew that He was coming to His own, and that His own would not receive Him. It was a plunge out of supernal light into the heart of darkness. II. We are never to forget, as a most charming characteristic of the coming of Jesus, that it was WHOLLY VOLUNTARY. He CAME. He was not brought. He was not compelled to come. No law of justice could have broken His consciousness of holiness and greatness if He had not come. III. WHY SHOULD HE HAVE COME AT ALL? There was something to save, something precious in His eyes, whatever it may seem in ours. Cold criticism would ask why it was necessary, whether some other expedient might not have been devised; but love is swifter than reason. How could He come to save us? is the question of reason in moments when it is unloving. How could He not come to save us? is the question of rational love. IV. HIS INCARNATION DID MANY THINGS FOR US WHICH WE DO NOT SEE COULD BE OTHERWISE DONE. 1. It was a manifestation of God: "God was manifest in the flesh." The visible world had so engrossed us that our race was going down into lowermost materialism, so that the Roman type of thought was "earthly," the Grecian "sensual," and the barbarian "devilish." And on one of these types all human thought would have formed itself for ever. But the Son of man came, and, by His words and deeds and spirit, gave such evidence of the existence of a Personal God and a spiritual world that our intellects were saved. We have since had certain centre and blessed attraction. If the Son of man had not come long before the age in which we live, the intellect of the race would have been utterly lost in the deep abyss of atheism, toward which it was rushing. 2. The heart and head have close fellowship. The corruption of the former does much to increase the errors of the latter, and the mistakes of the head aggravate the sorrows of the heart. The Son of God has come to save our hearts, as well as our intellects, by making the interests of God and man identical. 3. Under the atheistic errors of the intellect and the desperation of the heart, how manhood was sinking away! No human being can now estimate how low humanity would have sunk before our times if the Son of man had not come. All sublime and beautiful living is of the inspiration of His history. 4. He died for us that He might save our souls. The saving of our souls is the great object of the coming of the Son of man. (C. F. Deems, LL.D.) *The lost are found*:—1. "The Son of man." (1) His humanity. When the fulness of time was come, "God sent His Son, made of a woman" (Gal. iv. 4). As the flowers are said to have *solem in celo patrem, solum in terra matrem*; so Christ hath a Father in heaven without a mother, a mother on earth without a father. Here is then the wonder of His humanity. The "Everlasting Father" (Isa. ix. 6) is become a little child. The Son of God calls Himself the Son of man. (2) His humility. If your understandings can reach the depth of this bottom, take it at one view. The Son of God calls Himself the Son of man. The omnipotent Creator becomes an impotent creature. So greater humility never was than this, that God should be made man. It is the voice of pride in man, "I will be like God" (Isa. xiv. 14); but the action of humility in God, "I will be man." (1) Esteem we not the worse but the better of Christ, that He made Himself the Son of man. Let Him not lose any part of His honour because He abased Himself for us. He that took our flesh "is also over all, God blessed for ever, Amen" (Rom. ix. 5). (2) The other use is St. Paul's: "Let the same mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus" (Phil. ii. 5). What mind is that? Humility. 2. "Is come." We understand the person, let us come to His coming. And herein, *ecce veritatem*—behold His truth. Did God promise a son of a virgin; Emmanuel, a Saviour? He is as good as His word; *venit*, "He is come." Did the sacrificed blood of so many bulls, goats, and lambs, prefigure the expiatory blood of the Lamb of God to be shed? *Ecce Agnus Dei*—"Behold that Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world." 3. "To seek." He is come; to what purpose? *Ecce compassionem*—"to seek." All the days of His flesh upon earth He went about seeking souls. When the sun shines, every bird comes forth; only the owl will not be found. These birds of darkness cannot abide the light, "because their deeds are evil" (John iii. 19). Thus they play at all-hid with God, but how foolishly! Like that beast that having thrust his head in a bush, and seeing nobody, thinks nobody sees him. But they shall find at last that not holes of mountains or caves of rocks can conceal them (Rev. vi. 16). Secondly, others play at fast and loose with God; as a man behind a tree, one while seen, another while hid. In the day of prosperity they are hidden; only in affliction they come out of their holes. Thirdly, others being lost, and hearing the seeker's voice, go further from Him.

The nearer salvation comes to them, the further they run from it. 4. "To save." *Ecce pietatem*, behold His goodness. Herod sought Christ *ad interitum*, to kill Him; Christ seeks us *ad salutem*, to save us. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. i. 15). 5. "The lost." There *ecce potestatem*, behold His power. He is that "strongest man" that unbound us from the fetters of sin and Satan. "Lost!" But where was man lost? There are diverse losing-places. (T. Adams, D.D.) *Christ seeking and saving the lost*.—I. IN WHAT SENSE WE ARE SAID TO BE LOST. 1. Really and indeed; so we are lost to God and lost to ourselves. As to God, He hath no glory, love, and service from us, and so is deprived and robbed of the honour of His creation. 2. Some are lost and undone in their own sense and feeling. All by reason of sin are in a lost state, but some are apprehensive of it. Now such a sense is necessary to prepare us for a more broken-hearted and thankful acceptance of the grace of the gospel. II. IN WHAT SENSE CHRIST IS SAID TO SEEK AND SAVE SUCH. Here is a double work—seeking and saving. 1. What is His seeking? It implieth—(1) His pity to us in our lost estate, and providing means for us, in that He doth not leave us to our wanderings, or our own heart's counsels, but taketh care that we be brought back again to God (John x. 16). (2) His seeking implieth His diligence and pains to reduce them (Luke xv. 4). It requireth time and pains to find them, and gain their consent. A lost soul is not so easily recovered and reduced from his straying; there is many a warning slighted, many a conviction smothered, and tenders of grace made in vain. I evidence this two ways—(1) Christ is said to seek after us by His word and Spirit. (a) By His word, He cometh as a teacher from heaven, to recall sinners from their wanderings. (b) By His Spirit striving against and overcoming the obstinacy and contradiction of our souls. By His call in the word He inviteth us to holiness, but by His powerful grace He inclineth us. (2) This seeking is absolutely necessary: if He did not seek them, they would never seek Him. 2. To save them. Two ways is Christ a Saviour—*merito et efficacia*, by merit and by power. We are sometimes said to be saved by His death, and sometimes to be saved by His life (Rom. v. 10). Here I shall do two things—(1) I shall show why it is so; (2) I shall prove that this was Christ's great end and business. First, Why it is so. 1. With respect to the parties concerned. In saving lost creatures, Christ hath to do with three parties—God, man, and Satan. 2. With respect to the parts of salvation. There is redemption and conversion, the one by way of imputation, to other by way of application. It is not enough that we are redeemed, that is done without us upon the cross; but we must also be converted, that is real redemption applied to us. 3. With respect to eternal salvation, which is the result of all, that is to say, it is the effect of Christ's merit and of our regeneration; for in regeneration that life is begun in us which is perfected in heaven. Secondly, I am to prove that this was Christ's great end and business. 1. It is certain that Christ was sent to man in a lapsed and fallen estate, not to preserve us as innocent, but to recover us as fallen. 2. Out of this misery man is unable to deliver and recover himself. 3. We being utterly unable, God, in pity to us, that the creation of man for His glory might not be frustrated, hath sent us Christ. Arguments to press you to accept of this grace. 1. Consider the misery of a lost condition. 2. Think of the excellency and reality of salvation by Christ (1 Tim. i. 15). 3. You have the means; you have the offer made to you (Isa. xxvii. 13). (T. Manton, D.D.) *The lost and sought-for soul*.—I. THE ORIGIN OF THE SOUL. It is from above. The ancient legends of a distant state of ancestral bliss, from which we have come, and which we have only in part forgotten, are woven out of the universal heart-experience. Dimly we remember Paradise; amidst the darkness we are groping our way back to the Tree of Life. II. THE PRESENT STATE OF THE SOUL. An exile and a wanderer. "I also am from God a wandering exile," said the Greek philosopher, Empedocles—a thought that was taken up and made the foundation of systems among some of the early Christian sects. They said that the parables in the Gospel of the lost piece of money, the lost sheep, the wandering and prodigal son, were all variations of this theme of the soul. There has come down to us a Gnostic hymn from very early times, in which the same spiritual theme is clothed in geographical details. A Parthian king's son comes from the bright realm of the East, and wanders through Babylonia to Egypt to seek a precious pearl which is there guarded by a serpent. Parthia stands, in reality, for the bright kingdom of light above, from which the soul has fallen. Egypt means the lower or material world, and Babylonia appears to denote some

intermediate state. There is a father and a mother by whom are meant an ideal first pair of parents of the living; and a brother who appears to signify the second Adam or Son of Man. The great serpent surrounding the sea is the soul of the present evil, or material world, ever an enemy to the human race. "Somehow," the hymn says, "they in Egypt found out that I was not their countryman, and they cunningly gave me their food to eat. I forgot that I was a prince, and I served their kings, and I forgot the pearl for which my parents had sent me, and I fell into a deep sleep. But my parents saw me afar off, and they devised a plan for my good. They wrote me a letter, which ran: "From thy father, the king of kings, and thy mother, the lady of the East, and thy brother, our second one, to thee our son in Egypt, greeting! Rouse up, and rise from thy sleep, listen to the words of our letter. Consider that thou art a son of kings. See into whose slavery thou hast fallen. Remember the pearl, for the sake of which thou wast sent to Egypt. Think of the garment, remember the splendid toga, which thou shalt wear—for thy name is written in the list of the brave—and that thou, with thy brother, our vicegerent, shalt come into our kingdom." The letter, sealed by the right hand of the king, was brought to me by the king of birds. I awoke, and broke the seal, and read, and the words agreed with those that were stamped upon my heart. I recollected that I was a son of royal parents, and my excellent birth maintained its nature." And so he proceeds to the quest of the pearl, which seems to be an allegory of the spark of celestial light and truth, which is still to be found, even amidst the debasement of earth, by every earnest seeking soul. And the letter stands for a higher revelation, and the splendid garment for the glorious spiritual body which the returned king's son is to wear in the presence of the King of kings. Such is a brief account of this Pilgrim's Progress of the olden time. This world is a goodly place, this body is a pleasant house to dwell in. And it may be that we are often tempted to say, If it be a prison, it is more splendid than a palace, and we are well content to be prisoners and exiles under such conditions. But there are moments of revelation, flashes of memory and insight which tell us otherwise. Away! this is not your rest! A despatch has come from our heavenly Father; its contents speak of what our heart had already spoken. And so we arise and still go on our quest of the pearl of great price, heedless of those smiling Egyptians, who would feed us on lotus, and bid us plunge into oblivion of our native home. No! we are sojourners only, nor can we rest until we have found what we were sent to find, and, holding it fast, come back to Him who sent us, and who is watching for our return. III. THE RECOVERY OF THE SOUL. One is seeking us; One wills that we should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. His kindly light has not yet, and will not, we trust, ever desert us. (*E. Johnson, M.A.*) *Christ seeking and saving those who were lost*.—I. What is implied in our being lost? II. How does Christ seek and save those that are lost? 1. Christ seeks those that are lost. (1) By His word. (2) By His providence. (3) By His Spirit. 2. Christ saves those that are lost—(1) By purchase. (2) By power. Conclusion: 1. From this subject, in the first place, we learn the wonderful generosity and kindness of Christ. 2. Let us also admire the power, as well as adore the grace, of the Saviour. (*S. Lavington.*) *Good news for the lost*.—The promises of God are like stars; there is not one of them but has in its turn guided tempest-tossed souls to their desired haven. But, as among the stars which stud the midnight sky, there are constellations which above all others attract the mariner's gaze, and are helpful to the steersman, so there are certain passages in Scripture which have not only directed a few wise men to Jesus, but have been guiding stars to myriads of simple minds who have through their help found the port of peace. The text is one of these notable stars, or rather, its words form a wonderful constellation of Divine love, a very Pleiades of mercy. But as stars are of small service when the sky is beclouded, or the air dense with fog, so it may be even with such a bright gospel light as our text will not yield comfort to souls surrounded with the clinging mists of doubts and fears. At such times mariners cry for fair weather, and ask that they may be able to see the stars again: so let us pray the Holy Spirit to sweep away with His Divine wind the clouds of our unbelief, and enable each earnest eye in the light of God to see the light of peace. I. HOW THE OBJECTS OF MERCY ARE HERE DESCRIBED. "That which was lost." A term large enough to embrace even the very worst. 1. We are all lost by nature. 2. Apart from Divine grace, we are lost by our own actions. 3. We are lost because our actual sin and our natural depravity have co-worked to produce in us an inability to restore ourselves from our fallen condition. Not only

wanderers, but having no will to come home. 4. We are lost by the condemnation which our sin has brought upon us. 5. Some of us are lost to society, to respect, and perhaps to decency. That was the case with Zaccheus. Now, the Son of Man is come to seek and to save those whom the world puts outside its camp. The sweep of Divine compassion is not limited by the customs of mankind: the boundaries of Jesus's love are not to be fixed by Pharisaical self-righteousness. II. **HOW THE SAVIOUR IS HERE DESCRIBED.** "The Son of man." 1. Note here His Deity. No prophet or apostle needed to call himself by way of distinction the son of man. This would be an affectation of condescension supremely absurd. Therefore, when we hear our Lord particularly and especially calling Himself by this name, we are compelled to think of it as contrasted with His higher nature, and we see a deep condescension in His choosing to be called the Son of man, when He might have been called the Son of God. 2. In speaking of Himself as the Son of man, our Lord shows us that He has come to us in a condescending character. 3. He has, moreover, come in His mediatorial character. 4. And He has come in His representative character. III. **HOW OUR LORD'S PAST ACTION IS DESCRIBED.** Not "shall come," but "is come." His coming is a fact accomplished. That part of the salvation of a sinner which is yet to be done is not at all so hard to be believed as that which the Lord has already accomplished. The state of the case since Jesus has come may be illustrated thus: Certain of our fellow-countrymen were the prisoners of the Emperor Theodore in Abyssinia, and I will suppose myself among them. As a captive, I hear that the British Parliament is stirring in the direction of an expedition for my deliverance, and I feel some kind of comfort, but I am very anxious, for I know that amidst party strifes in the House of Commons many good measures are shipwrecked. Days and months pass wearily on, but at last I hear that Sir Robert Napier has landed with a delivering army. Now my heart leaps for joy. I am shut up within the walls of Magdala, but in my dungeon I hear the sound of the British bugle, and I know that the deliverer is come. Now I am full of confidence, and am sure of liberty. If the general is already come, my rescue is certain. Mark well, then, O ye prisoners of hope, that Jesus is come. IV. There is much of deepest comfort in the DESCRIPTION WHICH IS HERE GIVEN OF OUR LORD'S WORK. "To seek and to save." The enterprise is one, but has two branches. 1. Jesus is come to seek the lost. (1) Personally. (2) In His providence. (3) By His Word. 2. Whom Jesus seeks, He saves. (1) By pardoning. (2) By bestowing another nature. Conclusion: Let us who are saved seek the lost ones. Jesus did it: O follower of Jesus, do likewise. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The mission of the Son of Man:*—I. I lay it down as a self-evident truth, that **WHATEVER WAS THE INTENTION OF CHRIST IN HIS COMING INTO THE WORLD, THAT INTENTION MOST CERTAINLY SHALL NEVER BE FRUSTRATED.** In the first place, it seems to be inconsistent with the very idea of God that He should ever intend anything which should not be accomplished. But again, we have before us the fact, that hitherto all the works of God have accomplished their purpose. I might use a hundred other arguments. I might show that every attribute of Christ declares that His purpose must be accomplished. He certainly has love enough to accomplish His design of saving the lost; for He has a love that is bottomless and fathomless, even as the abyss itself. And certainly the Lord cannot fail for want of power, for where we have omnipotence there can be no deficiency of strength. Nor, again, can the design be unaccomplished because it was unwise, for God's designs cannot be unwise. II. I have thus started the first thought that the intention of Christ's death cannot be frustrated. And now methinks every one will anxiously listen, and every ear will be attentive, and the question will arise from every heart, "WHAT THEN WAS THE INTENTION OF THE SAVIOUR'S DEATH? AND IS IT POSSIBLE THAT I CAN HAVE A PORTION IN IT?" For whom, then, did the Saviour die—and is there the slightest probability that I have some lot or portion in that great atonement which He has offered? I must now endeavour to pick out the objects of the Saviour's atonement. He came "to seek and to save that which was lost." We know that all men are lost in Adam. Again, we are all lost by practice. No sooner does the child become capable of knowing right and wrong, than you discover that he chooses the evil and abhors the good. Early passions soon break out, like weeds immediately after the shower of rain; speedily the hidden depravity of the heart makes itself manifest, and we grow up to sin, and so we become lost by practice. Then there be some who go further still. The deadly tree of sin grows taller and taller; some become lost to the Church. Now I will tell you the people whom Christ will save—they are those who are lost to themselves. III. **NOTICE THE OBJECTS OF THE**

DEATH OF CHRIST—He came “to seek and to save that which was lost.” (*Ibid.*) *Saving the lost*:—John Wesley says in his Journal: “On the 20th of December, 1778, I buried what was mortal of honest Silas Todd. For many years he attended the malefactors in Newgate without fee or reward, and I suppose no man for this hundred years has been so successful in that melancholy office. God had given him peculiar talents for it, and he had amazing success therein. The greatest part of those whom he attended died in peace, and many of them in the triumph of faith.”

Tholuck's personal effort for individual souls:—The German, Tholuck, a household name in the world's Christian homes, standing on the borders of the grave and looking back on the fifty fruitful years of preaching, teaching, and writing, exclaimed: “I value it all less than the love that seeks and follows,” by which he had been inspired from the year of his conversion. Personal effort for individual souls! “This is a work of which the world knows little, but of which the Lord knows much.” Not only seeking, but following! Here is a single illustration. A student at Halle was brought near to his heart by a godly mother. He fell into sin and vice. He was oftentimes visited by his loving teacher, late at night or in the early morning, after a night's debauch—sometimes in prison. Good promises were repeatedly made, and as repeatedly broken. Another sacred promise; the following day, late at night, came a card from him: “Tholuck sighs; Tholuck prays; but we will have our drink out.” Relying upon the co-working Spirit, still the saintly Tholuck followed. And the giddy youth became pastor of a well-known church in Berlin.

Seeking the lost:—I was returning home towards the evening of a miserably wet day. As I passed along I met a lady whom I knew. Though the rain fell thick and fast, she had no umbrella nor shawl, cloak, nor upper covering of any kind. My first thought was that reason had fled. But no—she had lost her child. A fine little boy had gone out with the servant, and while standing in a shop she had suddenly missed him. Of course I joined in the anxious search. As I went along beside that mother, I was struck with the contrast between her eager look, intense emotion, and restless energy, and the dull, listless apathy of the other by-passers in the busy streets. She had lost a son; that was the secret of it all. She could take no rest but in seeking. I could sympathize with her, but no more. I had not lost a son. I could not seek as she. (*Family Magazine.*) *Jesus finds the sinner*:—A Chinaman applied to a minister to be allowed to join his Church. The minister asked him some questions to find out whether he understood what it is to be a Christian, and how we are to be saved. Among other things he asked him—“How did you find Jesus?” In his broken English the poor man replied: “Me no find Jesus at all. Jesus Him find me.” *Christ seeks all*:—Between the hours

of ten and twelve, for many nights, a poor woman might have been seen making her way through the streets of London. A year had passed since her only daughter left home, and entered service in the metropolis. There she became acquainted with gay companions, and she was now living a life of open sin. The mother learned that her daughter might be seen every night in a certain part of the town. After many nights of watching, she was about to despair, when she saw a figure closely resembling that of her daughter. She eagerly approached, and was about to stretch out her arms to embrace it, when the light of the lamp showed that it was not her child. In an agony of grief she exclaimed, “Ah! it is not she. I was looking for my daughter; but, no, you are not my child.” The poor girl burst into tears, saying, “I have no mother—I wish I had; I wish some one would look for me. I wish some one would look for me.” Alas! there are multitudes who in the bitterness of their souls cry out, “I wish some one would look for me!” Fatherless, motherless, homeless, they tread their darkened course, and in the anguish of their stricken spirits cry out, “No man careth for my soul!” Thanks be to God, there is One who is higher than all, whose tender mercies fail not, and who looks with pitying eye on those upon whom others look with hate and scorn. And let us follow the example of Him whose mission here was to seek the ruined, and to save those that are lost. (*Christian Herald.*)

VERG. 11-27. A certain nobleman went into a far country.—Parable of the pounds:—I. CHRIST'S ABSENCE IS A PERIOD OF PROBATION. II. THE NATURE OF THE PROBATION IS TWOFOLD. 1. The obligation to loyalty involved in Christ's kingship and our citizenship. 2. The obligation to fidelity involved in Christ's lordship, and our service and trust. III. CHRIST'S RETURN WILL BE THE OCCASION OF ACCOUNT AND RECOMPENSE. (*J. R. Thomson, M.A.*) *Parable of the pounds*:—I. IN CHRIST'S KINGDOM THE CHARACTERISTIC FEATURE IS SERVICE. Instead of fostering

a spirit of self-seeking, Christ represents Himself as placing in the hands of each of His subjects a small sum,—a “pound” only, a Greek *mina*. What a rebuke to ambitious schemes! There is nothing suggestive of display, nothing to awaken pride. All that is asked or expected is fidelity to a small trust, a conscientious use of a little sum committed to each for keeping. This is made the condition and test of membership in Messiah’s kingdom. II. IN CHRIST’S KINGDOM SERVICE, HOWEVER SLIGHT, IS SURE OF REWARD. The faithful use of one pound brought large return. Christ asks that there be employed for Him only what has been received from Him. Augustine prayed, “Give what Thou requirest, and require what Thou wilt.” “Natural gifts,” says Trench, “are as the vessel which may be large or small, and which receives according to its capacity, but which in each case is filled: so that we are not to think of him who received the two talents as incompletely furnished in comparison with him who received the five, any more than we should affirm a small circle incomplete as compared with a large. Unfitted he might be for so wide a sphere of labour, but altogether as perfectly equipped for that to which he was destined.” The parable sets before us the contrasted results of using, or failing to use for Christ, a small bestowment. When this is faithfully employed, the reward, though delayed, is sure. III. IN CHRIST’S KINGDOM, FAILURE TO SERVE, RESULTS IN LOSS OF FACULTIES TO SERVE. One servant neglected to use his pound, and, on the king’s return, the unused gift was taken from him. This denotes no arbitrary enactment. The heart that refuses to love and serve Christ loses by degrees the capacity for such love and service. This is the soul’s death, the dying and decaying of its noblest faculties, its heaven-born instincts and aspirations. IV. IN CHRIST’S KINGDOM, SERVICE, OR NEGLECT OF SERVICE, GROWS OUT OF LOVE, OR THE WANT OF LOVE, TO CHRIST. The citizens “hated the king, and would not have him to rule over them.” The idle servant “knew that he was an austere man.” In neither case was there love, and hence in neither case service. Loveto Christ is indispensable to serving Him. (P. B. Davis.) *Trading for Christ*:—I. EVERY CHRISTIAN IS ENDOWED BY HIS REDEEMER. All that a man hath, that is worth possessing, all that he lawfully holds, partakes of the nature of a Divine endowment; even every natural faculty, and every lawful acquisition and attainment. II. OF THE THINGS CHRIST HAS GIVEN US, WE ARE STEWARDS. Now stewardship involves what? It involves responsibility to another. We are not proprietors. III. IN OUR USE OF WHAT CHRIST HAS COMMITTED TO US, HE EXPECTS US TO KEEP HIMSELF AND HIS OBJECTS EVER IN VIEW. What we do, is to be done for His sake. If we give a cup of cold water to a disciple, it is to be in the name of a disciple, it is to be given for Jesus’ sake. Whatever we do is to be done as to Him. If we regard a day as sacred, we must regard it unto the Lord. If we refuse to regard a particular day as sacred, that refusal is to be as unto the Lord. If we eat, we are to eat to the Lord. If we refuse to eat, that refusal, again, is to be as unto the Lord. Brethren, we have not yet entered sufficiently into the idea of servitude, and yet the position of servitude is our position. Towards Christ we are not only pupils—we are not only learners—we are as servants. We have a distinct and positive vocation. IV. This passage reminds us that THE SAVIOUR WILL COME, AND CALL US TO ACCOUNT FOR THE USE OF ALL THAT HE HAS COMMITTED TO US. V. ACTIVITY IN THE PAST WILL NOT JUSTIFY INERTNESS IN THE PRESENT. (S. Martin, D.D.) *Parable of the pounds*:—Notice the following points: 1. The “pound” had been kept in a napkin—to show sometimes, as people keep a Bible in their house to let us see how religious they are. But the very brightness of the Book proves how little it is read. It is kept for the respectability of it, not used for the love of it. The anxious faithless keeper of the pound had perhaps sometimes talked of his fellow-servants “risking their pounds in that way”; adding “I take care of mine.” But spending is better than hoarding; and the risks of a trade sure to be on the whole gainful are better than the formal guardianship of that which, kept to the last, is then lost, and which, while kept, is of no use. 2. The pound is taken away from the unfaithful servant, and given to the ablest of the group. Let the man who is ablest have what has been wasted. Let all, in their proportion, receive to their care the advantages which have been neglected, and employ these for themselves and for us. 3. Notice next, how it fares with the different servants when the king and the master return. Those who had been faithful are all commended and rewarded. The king shares his kingdom with those who had been faithful to him in his poverty. They have gained pounds, and they receive cities. The master receives those into happiest intimacy with himself, who, in his absence, have been faithfully industrious for him. These good men enter into his joy. He delayed his coming; but they

continued their labours. They said not, "He will never come to reckon with us; let us make his goods our own; we have been busy, let us now be merry." "Outer darkness!" How expressively do the words represent both the state of man before his soul's good is gained, and his state when that good has been lost! Who that has gained shelter, and is one of the many whose hope, whose interests are one, who have light and warmth and sometimes festive music, would be cast forth again into the cold, dark, lonely night? 4. There are for each man two ways of gain—the direct and the indirect, increase and interest. How comes increase? It comes by the plenty of nature, which enables us to add one thing to another, as gold to iron and wood; by the productiveness of nature, which out of one seed yields many; by the application of skill to nature, through which we extract, connect, and adapt nature's gifts, and, first fashioning tools, then fashion many things. But all were to little purpose without combination. And whatever of ours another uses, paying us for the use, yields us interest. We depend for the increase of our possessions on our connection with others, our combination with them. And we can always employ our "talent" indirectly, if we cannot directly; usually, we can do both. We can both sow a field and lend money to a farmer. We can attend to work of our own, and sustain the work of others. We can teach, and help, and comfort; and we can subscribe in aid of those who do such work of this kind as we cannot ourselves perform. (T. T. Lynch.) *The servants and the pounds*:—I. THERE ARE HERE TWO SETS OF PERSONS. We see the enemies who would not have this man to reign over them, and the servants who had to trade with his money. You are all either enemies or servants of Jesus. II. We now advance a step further, and notice THE ENGAGEMENTS OF THESE SERVANTS. Their lord was going away, and he left his ten servants in charge with a little capital, with which they were to trade for him till he returned. 1. Notice, first, that this was honourable work. They were not entrusted with large funds, but the amount was enough to serve as a test. It put them upon their honour. 2. It was work for which he gave them capital. He gave to each of them a pound. "Not much," you will say. No, he did not intend it to be much. They were not capable of managing very much. If he found them faithful in "a very little" he could then raise them to a higher responsibility. He did not expect them to make more than the pound would fairly bring in; for after all, he was not "an austere man." Thus he gave them a sufficient capital for his purpose. 3. What they had to do with the pound was prescribed in general terms. They were to trade with it, not to play with it. (1) The work which he prescribed was one that would bring them out. The man that is to succeed in trade in these times must have confidence, look alive, keep his eyes open, and be all there. (2) Trading, if it be successfully carried on, is an engrossing concern, calling out the whole man. It is a continuous toil, a varied trial, a remarkable test, a valuable discipline, and this is why the nobleman put his bondsmen to it, that he might afterwards use them in still higher service. (3) At the same time, let us notice that it was work suitable to their capacity. Small as the capital was, it was enough for them; for they were no more than bondsmen, not of a high grade of rank or education. III. Thirdly, to understand this parable, we must remember THE EXPECTANCY WHICH WAS ALWAYS TO INFLUENCE THEM. They were left as trusted servants till he should return, but that return was a main item in the matter. 1. They were to believe that he would return, and that he would return a king. 2. They were to regard their absent master as already king, and they were so to trade among his enemies that they should never compromise their own loyalty. 3. I find that the original would suggest to any one carefully reading it, that they were to regard their master as already returning. This should be our view of our Lord's Advent? He is even now on His way hither. IV. Now comes the sweet part of the subject. Note well THE SECRET DESIGN OF THE LORD. Did it ever strike you that this nobleman had a very kindly design towards his servants? Did this nobleman give these men one pound each with the sole design that they should make money for him? It would be absurd to think so. A few pounds would be no item to one who was made a king. No, no! it was, as Mr. Bruce says, "he was not money making, but character making." His design was not to gain by them, but to educate them. 1. First, their being entrusted with a pound each was a test. The test was only a pound, and they could not make much mischief out of that; but it would be quite sufficient to try their capacity and fidelity, for he that is faithful in that which is least will be faithful also in

much. They did not all endure the test, but by its means he revealed their characters. 2. It was also a preparation of them for future service. He would lift them up from being servants to become rulers. 3. Besides this, I think he was giving them a little anticipation of their future honours. He was about to make them rulers over cities, and so he first made them rulers over pounds. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Accountability and reward*.—1. We may learn that Christians have received special advantages, and that every one is accountable to God for the use or abuse of them. 2. From this parable we may learn that no man is so obscure or contemptible as to escape the penetrating eye of the Judge of the world; either because he has done nothing but evil, or done no good. No man is so mean, or poor, or wicked, as to be over-looked or forgotten. No man is so insignificant nor so feeble as not to have duties to perform. 3. From this parable also we infer that all who shall improve will be rewarded; and that the reward will be in proportion to the improvement. 4. The advantages which God bestows, when improved, shall be increased, so as to form additional means of progress; while he who misimproves his present means and opportunities shall be deprived of them. 5. Those who reject Jesus Christ shall be punished in the most exemplary manner (verse 27). (*J. Thomson, D.D.*) *Lessons*.—1. That our Lord's absence, here attributed to His having gone to receive a kingdom, does not conflict with other representations of the reason of such absence, viz., to send forth the Holy Spirit, and "to make intercession for us." 2. That the period of our Lord's absence is definite in its duration, "until the times of restitution of all things" (Acts iii. 21), and also under the absolute authority of the Father (Acts i. 7). 3. That our duty is not to be prying into the mysteries of our Lord's coming, or spending precious time in making useless calculations in respect to the time when He will come, but to "occupy" till He come. (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*) *Christ's spiritual kingdom*.—I. THE PROPER NATURE OF THE KINGDOM. 1. The Son of God from heaven is King. 2. He has received the kingdom in heaven. He will give full manifestation of it from heaven; and return. II. THE PRESENT STATE OF THE KINGDOM. Although a heavenly kingdom, it yet stretches over the whole human race upon earth; for on earth He has—1. Servants, as stewards of entrusted gifts. 2. Enemies, who grudge His heavenly glory. III. THE FUTURE MANIFESTATION OF THE KINGDOM SHOWS IT TO BE A HEAVENLY ONE, from the manner in which rewards and punishments are to be distributed; which is—1. Righteous and beneficent in the gracious apportionment of reward to those of approved fidelity. 2. Just and righteous in the punishment—(1) of the faithless; (2) of avowed enemies. (*F. G. Lisco.*) *Parable of the pounds*.—I. THE DESIGN OF THIS PARABLE. 1. It corrects false notions about the immediate appearance of God's kingdom as temporal and visible. 2. It teaches that Christ would take His departure from earth, and delay His return. 3. It enforces the need of present fidelity to our trust. 4. It illustrates the folly of expecting good from the future if the present be neglected. 5. It contains the promise of our Lord's return. II. WHEN WILL HE COME TO US INDIVIDUALLY? 1. Either at our death. 2. Or, at the last day to institute judgment. 3. The time for either, for both, is unknown to us. III. CLASSES PASSED UPON IN JUDGMENT AS HERE FORESHADOWED. 1. This parable contains no reference to the heathen. 2. Those who improved their pounds were approved and rewarded according to the measure of their fidelity. 3. He that knew his master's will and neglected his trust was reproved and deprived of his pound. 4. The Lord's enemies, who would not have Him to reign over them, were punished with the severity their hate and wicked opposition merited. IV. SOME LESSONS. 1. Our Lord's return has already been delayed 18— years. 2. We are not to infer from this that He never will return. 3. He that is faithful only in the visible presence of his master, is not entirely trustworthy. 4. Each one of the ten servants received ten pounds. The outward circumstances of none are so meagre that in them each one may not equally serve his Lord. 5. If the parable of the talents refers to inward gifts, which are equally distributed, then the parable of the pounds refer to our opportunities for doing good, which to all are alike. 6. Improved opportunities increase our capacity to do and get good. They are like money at interest. After Girard had saved his first thousand, it was the same, he said, as if he had a man to work for him all the time. 7. Neglected opportunities never return. You cannot put your hand into yesterday to do what was then neglected, or sow the seeds of future harvests. 8. Even if we knew that the Lord would return to-morrow, to-day's work should not be neglected. "Trade ye

herewith, till I come." (*L. O. Thompson.*) *The pounds*:—1. The departure of the nobleman to the far country, and his sojourn there until he should receive his kingdom, intimate that the second coming of the Lord was not to be immediate. 2. The true preparation for the coming of the Kingdom of the Lord, is that of character. The "pound" given to each, is the common blessing of the gospel and its opportunities. I. THE GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT WHO MADE HIS ONE POUND INTO TEN. Symbolizing the conduct and blessedness of those who make the most of their enjoyment of the gospel blessings. They do not despise the day of small things. They do not trifle away their time in idleness, or waste it in sin; but finding salvation in the gospel, through faith in Jesus Christ, they set themselves to turn every occupation in which they are engaged, and every providential dispensation through which they may be brought, to the highest account, for the development in them of the Christian character. II. ANOTHER WAY OF DEALING WITH THE COMMON BLESSING OF THE GOSPEL IS ILLUSTRATED IN THE CASE OF HIM WHO HAD INCREASED HIS POUND TO FIVE. He had been a real servant; but his diligence had been less ardent, his devotion less thorough, his activity less constant, and so the Lord simply said to him, "Be thou also over five cities." The representative of the easy-going disciple. There are some who will be saved, yet so as by fire, and others who shall have salvation in fulness; some who shall have little personal holiness on which to graft the life of the future, and who shall thus be in a lower place in heaven for evermore, enjoying its blessedness as thoroughly as they are competent to do, yet having there a position analogous it may be, though of course not at all identical, with that occupied by the Gideonites of old in the promised land. III. THE SERVANT WHO HID HIS POUND IN THE EARTH, AFTER HE HAD CAREFULLY SOUGHT TO KEEP IT FROM BEING INJURED, BY WRAPPING IT IN A NAPKIN. He lost everything by an unbelieving anxiety to lose nothing. He was so afraid of doing anything amiss, that he did nothing at all. The representative of the great multitude of hearers of the gospel, who simply do nothing whatever about it. They do not oppose it; they do not laugh at it; they do not argue against it; their worst enemies would not call them immoral; but they "neglect the great salvation," and think that because, as they phrase it, they have done no harm, therefore they are in no danger. But Christ requires positive improvement of the privileges which He bestows. IV. THE CONDUCT OF THOSE CITIZENS WHO HATED THE NOBLEMAN, AND SAID, "We will not," &c. Open enemies. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Occupy till I come.*—*The traffic of the kingdom*:—Our Lord leads us into the great mart, and cries, "Occupy till I come." I. The Lord gives every man a fair start in this business, and old obligations are paid. II. The Lord backs all the just and legal promissory notes of His merchantmen. "I am with you." III. The Christian trader has influential partnership. "Co-workers with God." IV. Success in this business requires extensive advertisement. 1. By expression of word. 2. By expression of deportment. V. Diplomacy is essential. When to expend, when recruit. VI. True effort and success will flow from intense earnestness. VII. In this business nothing succeeds like success. His talents—are we improving them? (*D. D. Moore.*) *Occupation*:—I. LIFE OUGHT TO BE ONE OF OCCUPATION. World a great workshop. II. WORK SHOULD BE RECEIVED AS FROM CHRIST. He says, "Occupy." We must make sure that our occupation, or any part of it, is not in opposition to His will. III. WORK TRULY PERFORMED LEADS TO AND PREPARES FOR HIGHER WORK. "Occupy till I come." When He came it was to give kingdoms instead of pounds. The schoolboy does not need costly books. The young apprentice has his hand and eye trained by working on cheap materials. Every duty faithfully discharged is a step on God's ladder of promotion. Do not wait for some great opportunity. The born artist makes his first pictures with a bit of chalk or burnt stick. IV. THE WHOLE LIFE SHOULD BE SOLEMNIZED AND GUIDED BY THE THOUGHT OF CHRIST'S COMING. "Occupy till I come." The irrational creatures instinctively and necessarily perform their parts. The earth was kept by them till the householder, man, appeared. But the thought of Christ's coming, the thought of meeting Him to give in our account, is necessary for man's right living here. Some say that men are simply to act their part, without thinking of a future. But a man cannot do this. As the sailor, the traveller, knows whether he is going before he sets out, and makes his preparations and steers his course accordingly, so must we. A ship simply set adrift—a traveller merely wandering on—is most unlikely to reach any happy haven. We must give account. We are moving on to the Judgment-seat of Christ. Duties done or neglected, opportunities improved or wasted, will meet us there. (*E. F.*

Scott.) We will not have this man to reign over us.—*Christ's spiritual kingdom and its rejection by men*.—1. THAT CHRIST HATH A SPIRITUAL KINGDOM; for all things concur here which belong to a kingdom; here is a monarch, which is Christ; a law, which is the gospel; subjects, which are penitent believers; rewards and punishments, eternal life and eternal torment. 1. Here is a monarch, the mediator, whose kingdom it is. Originally it belongeth to God as God, but derivatively to Christ as Mediator (Psa. ii. 6; Phil. ii. 10, 11). 2. There are subjects. Before I tell you who they are, I must premise that there is a double consideration of subjects. Some are subjects by the grant of God, others are subjects not only by the grant of God, but their own consent. 3. The law of commerce between this sovereign and these subjects (for all kingdoms are governed by laws). 4. Rewards and punishments. (1) For punishments. Though the proper intent and business of the gospel is to bless, and not to curse, yet, if men wilfully refuse the benefit of this dispensation, they are involved in the greatest curse that can be thought of (John iii. 19). (2) Rewards. The privileges of Christ's kingdom are exceeding great. (a) For the present, pardon and peace. (b) Hereafter eternal happiness. II. That in all reason THIS KINGDOM SHOULD BE SUBMITTED UNTO.—1. Because of the right which Christ hath to govern. He hath an unquestionable title by the grant of God (Acts ii. 36). And His own merit of purchase (Rom. xiv. 9). 2. This new right and title is comfortable and beneficial to us. 3. It is by His kingly office that all Christ's benefits are applied to us. As a Priest, He purchased them for us; as a Prophet, He giveth us the knowledge of these mysteries; but as a King, He conveyeth them to us, overcoming our enemies, changing our natures, and inclining us to believe in Him, love Him, and obey Him (Acts v. 31). 4. Our actual personal title to all the benefits intended to us is mainly evidenced by our subjection to His regal authority. 5. We shall be unwillingly subject to His kingdom of power if we be not willingly subject to His kingdom of grace. 6. This government, which we so much stick at, is a blessed government. Christ Himself pleadeth this (Matt. xi. 30), "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." It is sweet in itself, and sweet in the issue. III. WHAT MOVETH AND INFLUENCETH MEN SO MUCH TO DISLIKE CHRIST'S REIGN AND GOVERNMENT. 1. The evil constitution of men's souls. This government is contrary to men's carnal and brutish affections. It comes from an affectation of liberty. Men would be at their own dispose, and do whatsoever pleaseth them, without any to call them to an account (Psa. xii. 4). 3. It proceeds from the nature of Christ's laws. (1) They are spiritual. (2) They require self-denial. Information. 1. It sheweth us whence all the contentions arise which are raised about religion in the world. All the corrupt part of the world oppose His kingly office. 2. It informeth us how much they deserve Christianity that will hear of no injunctions of duty, or mention of the law of faith, or of the new covenant as a law. Besides that they take part with the carnal world, who cannot endure Christ's reign and government, they blot out all religion with one dash. If there be no law, there is no government, nor governor, no duty, no sin, no punishment nor reward; for these things necessarily infer one another. 3. It informeth us what a difficult thing it is to seat Christ in His spiritual throne, namely, in the hearts of all faithful Christians. 4. It informeth us of the reason why so many nations shut the door against Christ, or else grow weary of Him. 5. It informeth us how ill they deal with Christ who have only notional opinions about His authority, but never practically submit to it. Exhortation. If we would distinguish ourselves from the carnal world, let us resolve upon a thorough course of Christianity, owning Christ's authority in all things. 1. If we be to begin, and have hitherto stood against Christ, oh! let us repent and reform, and return to our obedience (Matt. xviii. 3). 2. Remember that faith is a great part of your works from first to last (John vi. 27). 3. Your obedience must be delightful, and such as cometh from love (1 John v. 3). 4. Your obedience must be very circumspect and accurate (Heb. xii. 28). 5. It is a considerable part of our work to look for our wages, or expect the endless blessedness to which we are appointed (Titus ii. 13). (*T. Manton, D.D.*) When He was returned.—*The Lord's return*.—Some weeks ago a great procession was in Chicago. On Sunday evening before, the park was filled with tents and people, in preparation for the display on Tuesday. Passing down the avenue, a lad said, as we crossed the railway track: "Did you see that long train of cars, sir? They are going after the knights." "Yes, I saw them," was the reply. "My cousin is one of them, sir; he is a sir-knight. I wish I was one," said the boy. "Why?" said the gentleman. "Oh! they loose

so pretty, and they'll have a big time, sir." "Yes," said the man, "but it is a great expense—one or two millions, and the interest of the money would support all the poor in the city." "I never thought of that," said the boy; "and we are poor." Having asked his age, residence, and place of work, the gentleman said, "Do you go to church and Sunday-school?" "Yes," said the boy. "Did you ever hear of Jesus?" "Yes, indeed." "Do you know He will come again—come in glory, with all the angels, with all the prophets, kings, martyrs, holy men, and children, and with all the babies that have ever died?" "W-e-l-l," said the boy, "I don't believe this procession, big as it is, will be a flea-bite to that one, do you, sir?" "No, indeed," said the man; "and remember, also, that when He comes in glory He will give places to every one who has been faithful to Him; even a boy may shine in that great company." "Well, sir," said the lad, "I will tell you what I think. I had rather be at the tail-end of Jesus' procession than to be at the head of this one. Wouldn't you, sir?" Even so it will be. But His enemies, what of them? Slain before Him. There are His servants, His family, and His enemies; there is glory, reward, and judgment. Which for you and me? *Three ways of treating God's gifts*:—There are three ways in which we may treat God's gifts; we may misuse them, neglect them, or use them to good purpose. A tool-chest is a very handy thing. The boy who has one can do good work with it, if he wishes. But if he uses the chisel to chip the noses of statuettes, or the hammer to drive nails into choice pictures, or the hatchet to cut and hack the young trees in the orchard, that tool-chest becomes anything but a valuable acquisition to the family. A sharp knife is a good thing, but in the hand of a madman it may do untold damage. So education and natural talent are good things when rightly used; but there is no rogue so dangerous as the educated or talented rogue. Neglect, too, destroys. The sharpest tool will by and by rust, if left unused. The bread for our nourishment, if unused, will soon change into a corrupt mass. The untended garden will be quickly overrun with weeds. The sword that is never drawn at last holds fast to the scabbard. And so the learning and the talents that lie idle soon begin to deteriorate. An Eastern story tells of a merchant who gave to each of two friends a sack of grain to keep till he should call for it. Years passed; and at last he claimed his own again. One led him to a field of waving corn, and said, "This is all yours." The other took him to a granary, and pointed out to him as his a rotten sack full of wasted grain. On the other hand, the proper use of talents brings its own reward. Cast forth the seed, and the harvest is sure. The sculptor's chisel carves out the statue. Beneath the hand of man great palaces grow up. And beyond and above all, there is the consciousness that every good use of a talent, every noble act done, is adding a stone to the stately temple that shall be revealed hereafter. (*Sunday School Times*.) *Thou hast been faithful in a very little*.—*Faithfulness in little things*:—There is a principle in this award which regulates God's dealings with us in either world. And it is this—the ground and secret of all increase is "faithfulness." And we may all rejoice that this is the rule of God's moral gifts—for had anything else except "faithfulness" been made the condition, many would have been unable, or at least, would have thought themselves unable, to advance at all. I should have no hesitation in placing first "faithfulness" to convictions. So long as a man has not silenced them by sin, the heart is full of "still small voices," speaking to him everywhere. There is a duty which has long lain neglected, and almost forgotten. Suddenly, there wakes up in your mind a memory of that forgotten duty. It is a very little thing that, by some association, woke the memory. An old sin presents itself to your mind in a new light. A thought comes to you in the early morning, "Get up." Presently, another thought says, "You are leaving your room without any real communion with God." Those are convictions. Everybody has them—they are the movings of the Holy Ghost in a man—they are the scintillations of an inner life which is struggling with the darkness. But, be "faithful" to them; for if you are unfaithful, they will get weaker and weaker, and fewer and fewer, till they go out. But if you are "faithful" to them, there will be an increase—stronger, more frequent, loftier, more spiritual, they will grow—till it is as if your whole being were penetrated with the mind of God; and everything within you and around you will be a message, and the whole world will be vocal to you of Christ. Next to this "faithfulness" to convictions, I should place "faithfulness in little things" to men—and this of two kinds. It is of the utmost importance that you be scrupulously accurate and just in all your most trivial transactions of honour and business with your fellow-creatures. And, secondly, every one of us has, or

might have, influence with somebody. The acquisition and the use of that influence are great matters of "faithfulness." (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) *Soul-growth depends on fidelity*:—To employ well the present, is to command the future. And that for two reasons. One, the natural law, which pervades all nature, rational and irrational, that growth is the offspring of exercise. And the other, the sovereign will of a just God to increase the gifts of those who use them. But whence "faithfulness"? How shall we cultivate it? First, think a great deal of God's faithfulness—how very "faithful" He has been to you—how "faithful" in all the little events of your life, and in all the secret passages of your soul. Steep your mind in the thought of the faithfulness of God to you, in all your little things, till you catch its savour. Look at it till the finest traits reflect themselves upon your heart. And, secondly, go, and do to-day some one "faithful" thing. Do it for Christ. Be "faithful" where your conscience tells you you have been faithless. (*Ibid.*) *Faithful in little*:—A Persian king when hunting wished to eat venison in the field. Some of his attendants thereupon went into a village near, and helped themselves to a quantity of salt for their master. The king, suspecting what they had done, made them go back and pay for it, with the remark, "If I cannot make my people just in small things, I can at least show them that it is possible to be so." *The joy of faithful work*:—There comes over to our shores a poor stonecutter. The times are so bad at home that he is scarcely able to earn bread enough to eat; and by a whole year's stinting economy he manages to get together just enough to pay for a steerage passage to this country. He comes, homeless and acquaintanceless, and lands in New York, and wanders over to Brooklyn and seeks employment. He is ashamed to beg bread; and yet he is hungry. The yards are all full; but still as he is an expert stonecutter, a man, out of charity, says, "Well, I will give you a little work—enough to enable you to pay for your board." And he shows him a block of stone to work on. What is it? One of many parts which are to form some ornament. Here is just a quert or fern, and there is a branch of what is probably to be a flower. He goes to work on this stone, and most patiently shapes it. He carves that bit of a fern, putting all his skill and taste into it. And by and by the master says, "Well done," and takes it away, and gives him another block, and tells him to work on that. And so he works on that, from the rising of the sun till the going down of the same, and he only knows that he is earning his bread. And he continues to put all his skill and taste into his work. He has no idea what use will be made of those few stems which he has been carving, until afterwards, when, one day, walking along the street, and looking up at the front of the Art Gallery, he sees the stones upon which he has worked. He did not know what they were for; but the architect did. And as he stands looking at his work on that structure which is the beauty of the whole street the tears drop down from his eyes, and he says, "I am glad I did it well." And every day, as he passes that way, he says to himself exultingly, "I did it well." He did not draw the design nor plan the building, and he knew nothing of what use was to be made of his work; but he took pains in cutting those stems; and when he saw that they were a part of that magnificent structure his soul rejoiced. Dear brethren, though the work which you are doing seems small, put your heart in it; do the best you can wherever you are; and by and by God will show you where He has put that work. And when you see it stand in that great structure which He is building you will rejoice in every single moment of fidelity with which you wrought. Do not let the seeming littleness of what you are doing now damp your fidelity. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Laid up in a napkin*.—*Laziness in the Church*:—This part of the parable is meant to teach the necessity of developing our forces, and bringing them into use in Christian life. The duty of the development of power in one's self as a part of his allegiance to Christ is the main thought. So, also, is it wrong for one affecting to be a Christian to confine his development and increase simply to things that surround him and that strengthen him from the exterior. It is not wrong for a man to seek wealth in appropriate methods and in due measure; it is not wrong for a man to build up around himself the household, the gallery, the library; it is not wrong for a man to make himself strong on the earthward side; but to make himself strong only on that side is wrong. Every man is bound to build within. Indeed, the very one of the moral functions which inheres in all religious industries is that, while a man is building himself exteriorly according to the laws of nature and society and of moral insight, he is by that very process building himself inwardly. He is building himself in patience, in foresight, in self-denial, in liberalities; for often generosity and liberality are in the struggle of men in life

what oil is in the machine, that make the friction less and the movement easier. So it is wrong for men to build themselves up simply for the sake of deriving more pleasure from reason, from poetic sensibility, and from all æsthetic elements; but it is not wrong for them to render themselves, through education, susceptible to finer and higher pleasures. Not only this, but we learn from a fair interpretation of this parable that men are not to be content with their birthright state. It is not enough that a man has simply the uneducated qualities that are given to him. Life educates us so far as the gift of the hand and the foot is concerned. In so far as secular relations are concerned, the necessities of business and the sweep of public sentiment are tending constantly to educate men to bring out all that there is in them. In the higher spiritual life it is not always the case. Men are content with about the moral sense that they have, if it averages the moral sense of the community; about the amount of faith that comes to them without seeking or education; about the amount of personal and moral influence that exists in social relations. But the law of the gospel is: Develop. No man has a right to die with his faculties in about the state that they were when he came to his manhood. There should be growth, growth. Going on is the condition of life in the Church or in the community just as much as in the orchard or in the garden. When a tree is "bound" and won't grow, we know that it is very near to its end; and a tree that will not grow becomes a harbour of all manner of venomous insects. Men go and look under the bark, and seeing them consorting here and there and everywhere, say: "That is the reason the tree did not grow." No, it was the not growing that brought them there. And so all sorts of errors and mistakes cluster under the bark of men that stand still and do not unfold—do not develop. This being the doctrine, I remark, in the first place, that one may be free from all vices and from great sins, and yet break God's whole law. That law is love. Many say to themselves, "What wrong do I do?" The question is, What right do you do? An empty grape-vine might say, "Why, what harm do I do?" Yes, but what clusters do you produce? Vitality should be fruitful. Men are content if they can eat, and drink, and be clothed, and keep warm, and go on thus from year to year; because they say, "I cheat no one; I do not lie or steal, nor am I drunk. I pay my debts, and what lack I yet?" A man that can only do that is very poorly furnished within. And in no land in the world are men so culpable who stand still as in this land of Christian light and privileges. You are not saved because you do not do harm. In our age—in no land so much as in ours—not doing is criminal. The means of education, the sources of knowledge, the duties of citizenship, in this land, are such that to be born here is—I had almost said to take the oath—to fulfil these things. You cannot find in the New Testament anything that covers in detail each one of these particulars; and yet the spirit of the New Testament is—Grow, develop according to the measure of opportunity. That being so, there never was an age in which we had so much right to call upon men for fulness of influence and for the pouring out of their special and various talents in every sphere of duty. There never was a time, I think, in which it was so well worth a man's while to live. In former days a man might say: "I know nothing of all these things; how can I be blamed?" but no man can say that to-day. No man that works at the blacksmith's forge can say: "Well, I was a blacksmith." A man may be a blacksmith, and yet educate himself. No man can say: "I am a carpenter; how should I be suspected of knowledge?" If you do not have knowledge, you are not fit to be a carpenter. It is not enough that a man should increase his refinement; he is to increase it under the law: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." It is not enough that a man should pursue, ploughing deeply and uncovering continually, the truths of economy; he should seek for those truths that he may have that with which to enlighten and strengthen other men. (*Ibid.*) *The natural heart unveiled in the great account:—*I. First, lying at the bottom of all here, in the character of the natural mind, there comes out "the evil heart of unbelief"—A FATAL MISJUDGMENT OF THE ADORABLE GOD—an entire heart-ignorance of God, estrangement from God, believing of the devil's lie concerning God, in place of God's blessed revelation concerning Himself—"Thou art an austere man," a hard master, very difficult to please. Still, still, the natural conscience will bear stern witness to the reality of a Divine judgment and law. And so, as often as the fallen heart is forced into near contact with God, this is its language—scarce uttered consciously even to itself, and much less uttered audibly to others—"Thou art an austere man," a hard master, demanding things unreasonable, impossible for us weak creatures! Need I say that it is a lie of the

devil, a foul calumny on the blessed God? A hard master? Oh, "God is love." II. Second, and inseparably connected with this first feature in the character, see a second—A DARK, JEALOUS DREAD OF SUCH A GOD, prompting the wish to be away from Him—"I feared Thee, because Thou art an austere man," a hard master! The fear is obviously that of dark distrust, jealousy, suspicion. It is the opposite of confidence, affection, love. How, in fact, can such a God be loved? III. And now, connected inseparably with these two features of character, even as the second with the first, see the third feature in the character—completing it—even an UTTER INDISPOSITION FOR ALL CHEERFUL, ACTIVE SERVICE OF GOD, "For I feared Thee—Lord, behold, here is Thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin; for I feared Thee, because Thou art an austere man." Impossible to serve such a God—impossible, first, to love Him; and, next, impossible to serve a God unloved. Oh, love is the spring of service; distrust, jealousy, suspicion, are the death of it. But this man thinks he has served God tolerably well. "Lord, behold, here is Thy pound"! In the exceeding deceitfulness of the natural heart, does he contrive to persuade himself that he has given God no serious cause of offence with him. It is the more strange he should be able so to persuade himself, inasmuch as in his own word, "thy pound," he confesses that it was the property of another—of a Master who had lent it to him for a purpose, which, assuredly, was not that of keeping it laid uselessly up. "And He called His ten servants and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, 'Occupy till I come'"—"occupy," that is, traffic diligently, trade, "till I come." Oh, what is thus the whole Christian life but a busy commerce—a trading for God, for the good of all around us, for eternity? Fain I would have you to note—although it belongs less to my main theme—that, if you take the three features of character which we have seen in the text, and simply reverse them one by one, you shall have the whole character of God's regenerated child—of the renewed heart—that heart of which it is written, "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." Thus, 1. First, substitute for that word of the apostle, "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them," the one which follows it, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." For the mournful entire heart-ignorance of God, substitute the blessed promise fulfilled, "I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord." For the evil heart of unbelief, crediting the devil's lie concerning God, substitute that heaven-born faith, "We believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"—"We have known and believed the love that God hath unto us." And you have the foundation of the whole character of the new creature in Christ Jesus. 2. Secondly, for that fear of dark and jealous dread which springs of unbelief, substitute the love that springs of faith, "We love Him, because He first loved us"—"My beloved is mine, and I am His"—and you have the new heart in its very soul. 3. And thus, thirdly, for the utter indisposition to God's cheerful service, substitute that heart for all service, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" A practical inference or two before I close. (1) First, there is to be a judgment day. Do you believe it? (2) Second, how worthless, in that day, will be all merely negative religion—"Lord, behold, here is Thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin!" And as for all attempts to occupy neutral ground in the kingdom of Christ, what dreams they are! (3) But, thirdly, be it carefully noted that this, properly speaking, is not yet the Judge, but the Prophet, telling beforehand of the Judge, and of the judgment to come. (C. J. Brown, D.D.) "Out of thy own mouth will I judge thee":—Now the general truth that I would deduce from this narrative, and endeavour to establish, may be expressed in these terms. That insensibility and inaction with which mankind are to so great an extent chargeable, as touching religion, are indefensible on every ground, unsusceptible of apology from any quarter, and incapable of being justified on any principles whatsoever, being inconsistent with what is enjoined by every man's belief, however loose and erroneous it may be. 1. It is a principle universally admitted among men that every subject should receive a degree of attention proportioned to its intrinsic magnitude and our personal interest in it; and in things purely secular they endeavour to carry this principle into practice. But not to dwell too long on this, I pass to another principle of common life—2. Which is sinned against in religion, that of employing the present for the advantage of the

future. What man of you is there whose schemes do not contemplate the future, and whose labours do not look to that which is to come? 3. And here I am reminded of another inconsistency into which many fall. I refer to the unjustifiable and unauthorized use which they make of the fact of the Divine benevolence in their speculations upon religion. A use which they would blush to make of it in reference to any other subject. What would you think of the man who should found all his expectations of health, and affluence, and happiness, on the simple fact of the Divine benignity, and should infer from the truth that God is good, that he shall never know want or feel pain? 4. There is another common principle unhesitatingly admitted among men, on which I would remark in this connection, as being denied a place among the first truths of religion—the principle of not expecting any acquisition of considerable value without much precedent labour and pains taken for it. 5. There is yet one other principle of common life, which, we have to complain, is not acted upon in religion. It is that of adopting always the safer course. (*W. Nevins, D.D.*) **Unto every one which hath shall be given.**—*The law of use.*—The idea is that *having* is something quite other than mere passive possession—the upturned, nerveless palm of beggary. Having, real having, is eager, instant, active possession, the sinewy grip. Having is using. Anything not used is already the same as lost. It will be lost by and by. In this sense of having, the more we have, the more we get; the less we have, the less we get. This is law, universal law. I. **THIS LAW OF USE IS PHYSICAL LAW.** Muscular force gains nothing by being husbanded. Having is using. And to him that hath, shall be given. He shall grow stronger and stronger. What is difficult, perhaps impossible to-day, shall be easy to-morrow. He that keeps on day by day lifting the calf, shall lift the bullock by and by. More than this. Only he that uses shall even so much as keep. Unemployed strength steadily diminishes. The sluggard's arm grows soft and flabby. II. **THIS LAW OF USE IS COMMERCIAL LAW.** Real possession is muscular. The toil, care, sagacity, and self-denial required in getting property, are precisely the toil, care, sagacity, and self-denial required in keeping it. Nay, keeping is harder than getting, a great deal harder. Wise investments often require a genius like that of great generalship. Charles Lamb, in one of his essays, expresses pity for the poor, dull, thriftless fellow who wrapped his pound up in a napkin. But the poor fellow was also to be blamed. Those ten servants, who had the ten pounds given them, were commanded to trade therewith till the master came. III. **THIS LAW OF USE IS MENTAL LAW.** Even knowledge, like the manna of old, must needs be fresh. It will not keep. The successful teacher is always the diligent and eager learner. Just when he has nothing new to say, just then his authority begins to wane. Much more is mental activity essential to mental force. It is related of Thorwaldsen that when at last he finished a statue that satisfied him, he told his friends that his genius was leaving him. Having reached a point beyond which he could push no further, his instinct told him that he had already begun to fail. So it proved. The summit of his fame was no broad plateau, but a sharp Alpine ridge. The last step up had to be quickly followed by the first step down. It is so in everything. Ceasing to gain, we begin to lose. Ceasing to advance, we begin to retrograde. IV. **THIS LAW OF USE IS ALSO MORAL LAW.** Here lies the secret of character. There is no such thing as standing still. There is no such thing as merely holding one's own. Only the swimmer floats. Only the conqueror is unconquered. Character is not inheritance, nor happy accident, but hardest battle and victory. The fact is, evil never abdicates, never goes off on a vacation, never sleeps. Every day every one of us is ambushed and assaulted; and what we become, is simply our defeat or victory. Not to be crowned victor, is to pass under the yoke. If prayer be, what Tertullian has pictured it, the watch-cry of a soldier under arms, guarding the tent and standard of his general, then the habit of it ought to be growing on us. For the night is round about us, and, though the stars are out, our enemies are not asleep. If the Bible be what we say it is, we should know it better and better. Written by men, still it has God for its Author, unfathomable depths of wisdom for its contents, and for its shining goal the battlements and towers of the New Jerusalem. So of all the virtues and graces. They will not take care of themselves. Real goodness is as much an industry, as much a business, as any profession, trade, or pursuit of men. (*R. D. Hitchcock, D.D.*) *Spiritual investments.* :—I. **LET US SEEK TO GIVE FULL STATEMENT TO THE PRINCIPLE HERE ANNOUNCED, BEFORE WE ATTEMPT TO SHOW ITS PRACTICAL REACH.** 1. The meaning of our Lord's words is certainly clear. Consider that the pounds represent any sort of gift or endowment

for usefulness—any capacity, resource, instrument, or opportunity for doing good to our fellow men. He does not really possess anything; he only “occupies” it; it is actually lent money, and belongs to his Lord. 2. The illustrations which suggest themselves in ordinary experience will make the whole matter our own. We are simply reminded once more of the working of the universal law of exercise. Our bodily members and our intellectual faculties are skilled and invigorated by activity, and injured seriously by persistent disuse. An interesting example of cultivating alertness of observation is related in the life of Robert Houdin, the famous magician. Knowing the need of a swift mastery and a retentive memory of arbitrarily chosen objects in the great trick of second-sight, he took his son through the crowded streets, then required him to repeat the names of all the things he had seen. He often led the lad into a gentleman’s library for just a passing moment, and then afterwards questioned him as to the colour and places of the books on the shelves and table. Thus he taught him to observe with amazing rapidity, and hold what he gained, till that pale child baffled the wise world that watched his performances. But, highest of all, our spiritual life comes in for an illustration. Here we find that, in what is truly the most subtle part of our human organization, we are quite as remarkable as elsewhere. Even in our intercourse with God, we bend to natural law. He prays best who is in the habit of prayer. His very fervour and spirituality, as well as his fluency, are increased by constant practice. Thus it is with studious reading of the Scriptures. Thus it is with the constant and devout reference of one’s life to God’s overruling providence. And thus it is with preparedness for heaven. Piety altogether is as capable of growth as any possession we have. He who has, gains more; he who leaves unused what he has, loses it. II. A FEW PLAIN APPLICATIONS OF THIS PRINCIPLE. 1. Begin with the duty of Christian beneficence. Any pastor of a Church, any leader of a difficult enterprise, is acquainted with the fact that the best persons to ask for a contribution, with a sublime faith and a most cheerful expectation of success, are those who have just been giving largely, those who all along have been giving the most. Such Christians are prospered by the exercise. Their hearts and their purses alike are distended with the grace and the gold. 2. Take also the duty of teaching God’s truth to those who always need it. Does a wise man lose his learning by communicating it freely? Rather, are not those the best scholars who do hardest work in teaching the dulllest pupils with the most patience? 3. Again, take our consistency of demeanour. This, if anything, would seem most personal and most incommunicable. A Christian who cares nothing for what people say of him deteriorates in fidelity. He who tries hardest to disarm criticism by a godly demeanour will grow in correctness and satisfaction. He need not become more rigid and so more unamiable. 4. Just so, once more, take into consideration all kinds of ordinary Church activity. Those efficient believers, who are generally in the lead when each charitable and energetic work is in its turn on hand, are not so prominent just because they are ambitious and officious, nor because they love conspicuousness; but because being in one sort of earnest labour, they learn to love all labour for Christ. Most naturally, they grow unconsciously zealous for Him. III. This is going far enough now: we reach in proper order SOME OF THE MANY LESSONS WHICH ARE SUGGESTED BY THE PRINCIPLE. 1. It is high time that Christians should begin to apply business maxims to their spiritual investments. 2. Think joyously of the irresistible working of all these Divine laws of increase, if only we are found faithful. 3. Just here also we begin to understand what our Lord means when He tells us that “a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke xii. 15). We have no doubt that such a man as that in the parable, who hid his pound in the napkin, was far more disturbed over the care of it than either of those who had their ten or five pounds hard at work. Unemployed wealth, unimproved property, is but a perplexity, and generally enslaves the man who sits down to watch it. What we put to use—of our heart as well as of our money—is what we own; the rest owns us. 4. Finally, mark the sad reverse of all we have been dwelling upon. Observe that the pound taken away from this man was not his profit, but his capital. Hence, he had no further chance; the very opportunity of retrieval was gone. (C. S. Robinson, D.D.) *The napkin of secret doubt*:—“Dost thou believe this doctrine that I ask thee of? Dost thou hold it firmly?” “Indeed I do, sir. I keep it most carefully.” “Keep it carefully! What dost thou mean?” “I have it, sir, folded away in a napkin.” “A napkin! What is the name of that napkin?” “It is called secret doubt.” “And why dost thou keep the truth in the napkin of secret doubt?” “They tell me that if exposed to the air of inquiry it will dis-

appear; so, when asked for it, I shall not have it, and shall perish." "Thou art foolish, and they that have told thee this are foolish. Truth is corn, and thou wilt not be asked for the corn first given thee, but for sheaves. Thou art as if keeping thy corn in the sack of unbelief. The corn shall be taken from thee if thou use it not, and thyself put in thy sack of unbelief, and drowned in the deep, as evil-doers were punished in old times." (Thomas T. Lynch.) *Destroyed through disuse*:—The following extract from Mr. Darwin's recently published life will, perhaps, explain the cause of his rejection of Christianity. The words are his own: "I cannot endure to read a line of poetry: I have tried lately to read Shakespeare and found it so intolerably dull that it nauseated me. I have also almost lost my taste for pictures or music. . . . My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts, but why this should have caused the atrophy of that part of the brain alone on which the higher tastes depend I cannot conceive. . . . If I had to live my life again, I would have made a rule to read some poetry, and listen to some music at least once a week: for perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied would then have kept alive through use." "It is an accursed evil to a man," he writes in 1858, "to become so absorbed in any subject as I am in mine." We cannot be accused either of want of sympathy or want of charity if, in the light of what Darwin has told us of his religious history, we sum up his scepticism in those words which we have italicized—"atrophy of the brain." *The law of increase*:—"The Times," speaking of the Exhibition of the Royal Academy, says, "No doubt people ought to bring to a collection of pictures, or other works of art, as much knowledge as possible, according to the old saying that if we expect to bring back the wealth of the Indies, we must take the wealth of the Indies out with us. Learning and progress are continual accretions." This witness is true. He who studies the works of art in an exhibition of paintings, being himself already educated in such matters, adds greatly to his knowledge, and derives the utmost pleasure from the genius displayed. On the other hand, he who knows nothing at all about the matter, and yet pretends to be a critic, simply exhibits his own ignorance and self-conceit, and misses that measure of enjoyment which an entirely unsophisticated and unpretending spectator would have received. We must bring taste and information to art, or she will not deign to reveal her choicest charms. It is so with all the higher forms of knowledge. We were once in the fine museum of geology and mineralogy in Paris, and we noticed two or three enthusiastic gentlemen in perfect rapture over the specimens preserved in the cases; they paused lovingly here and there, used their glasses, and discoursed with delighted gesticulations concerning the various objects of interest; they were evidently increasing their stores of information; they had, and to them more was given. Money makes money, and knowledge increases knowledge. A few minutes after we noticed one of our own countrymen, who appeared to be a man of more wealth than education. He looked around him for a minute or two, walked along a line of cases, and then expressed the utmost disgust with the whole concern: "There was nothing there," he said, "except a lot of old bones and stones, and bits of marble." He was persuaded to look a little further, at a fine collection of fossil fishes, but the total result was a fuller manifestation of his ignorance upon the subjects so abundantly illustrated, and a declaration of his desire to remain in ignorance, for he remarked that "He did not care a rap for such rubbish, and would not give three half-crowns for a waggon-load of it." Truly, in the matter of knowledge, "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Vers. 28-40. *Ascending up to Jerusalem.—Christ journeying to Jerusalem:—I. THE MANNER IN WHICH HE WENT.* The only occasion on which we find Him riding. Fulfilment of a prophecy. *II. THE RECEPTION HE MET WITH.* *III. THE SORROW OF WHICH HE WAS THE SUBJECT, NOTWITHSTANDING THE ACCLAMATIONS HE RECEIVED.* 1. A benevolent wish. 2. An alarming sentence. 3. A melancholy prediction. Conclusion: Let us remember for our warning, that gospel opportunities when slighted will not be long continued. (*Expository Outlines.*) "*He went before*":—These are some of the thoughts which are suggested to our minds, as we see Jesus in the Scripture before us, taking the first place in the progress to Jerusalem and death. The position was emblematical as well as actual; and it suggests some teachings for us which are very calculated to bring comfort to our souls. Let us glance, first of all, for a moment, at the motion and position in itself. See the alacrity and willingness of Jesus to enter on suffering for us. And what do we learn here, but

that His heart was in the sad work which He had undertaken to do. The thoroughness of Christ's love is brought before us here. He was thorough in love. Mark, too, Christ's assumption of the position of a leader. He knew the place that had been assigned to Him by the Father; it was headship in suffering, as well as in glory; He took up at once, in that last journey, His rightful place. See, too, how our blessed Lord takes up a double position. He is at once leader and companion; His little company were one with Him; He with them; but yet a little before them. He talks with us, while He goes on before; He does not separate the leader and the companion; His lordship over us is so sweet, that He heads us as friends; having a common interest in all He does. And now, there is great teaching and comforting for us in all this. In the first place, we who follow Christ have to explore no untried, untrodden way. It is thus our comfort that we have always one to look to. Ours is no interminable road, no lonely, solitary path. Jesus, if only we can see aright, is never very far ahead. The mowers who mow in line, have much more heart during the burden and heat of the day, when their scythes sweep through the grass, keeping time to the stroke of a fellow-workman in front. The steadfastness of Christ's purpose is also forcibly suggested to us here. Firmly and intelligently, with a full knowledge of the indignity and death before Him, our Lord started forth, and took the headship of His little band on His way to Jerusalem. That steadfastness is of immense importance to us. Were there the least wavering in Christ's character, we were undone. And we hold on to this steadfastness now. We believe Him to be the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever; we see Him now acting from the cross, in the same spirit wherewith He journeyed to it. And now, let us in our trial-times see how Jesus has "gone before" in all. Is the path of weariness the one marked out for us; behold upon it the One who sat wearied upon Jacob's well; no longer weary, it is true, but remembering well all earth's wearinesses of body and spirit; and offering us His company on the trying path. Or, is it that of rejection? No thornier road is there on earth than that of biting poverty—poverty, with all its temptations and stings; well! Jesus was poor, an hungered and athirst, and had not where to lay His head. Before the poor; right on upon this path, is the figure of the Lord; let them but feel that He is their Lord, and they shall no longer be distressed at being the world's cast-offs; our being a cast-off of the world will not much matter, if we be companions of the Son of God. Then comes death itself—the last journey; the way from which human nature shrinks; the one which, despite rank or wealth, it must surely tread. Here, if we be inclined to faint, Jesus can be seen by His people, if only they believe. (*P. B. Power, M.A.*) **The Lord hath need of him.—The Lord's need:**—This trifling incident contains big principles. I. It gives us an idea of PROVIDENCE. Tendency of the age is to the *seen*. But mind kicks against it. Mind is like a bird, which pines in a cage. Here is hope for religion—the mind kicks against artificial conditionings. If you like you may say the mind likes, like a bird, to make its nest. True! but it wants above it not a ceiling but a sky. You can't cramp mind in your nutshell organizations. Shut it behind walls—and then it will ask, Who is on the other side of the wall? Providence involves two things. First—idea of God preserving, guarding our being and well-being. He preserves, though we don't see the way. How did Christ know that the colt was to be found at this stated moment? and that the owner would part with his property? Similarly, we must allow for the knowledge of God. The second thing involved in Providence is the idea of government. II. IN PROVIDENCE ATTENTION IS GIVEN TO LITTLE THINGS AS WELL AS GREAT. "A colt tied." It is demeaning God's economy—some will say. That all depends on your conception of God's economy. He numbers the hairs of our head. He sees when the sparrow falls. III. GOD HOLDS EVERY CREATURE RESPONSIBLE TO SHOW ITSELF WHEN WANTED. Everything, in God's order, has its time, and is not itself till that time reveals it. Sea-wrack on the sea-beach is ugly, slimy, hideous. But the same sea-wrack in a pool? How it spreads itself and makes every tiny filament beautiful! So prophecy in human history needs to be corroborated by the event, before it can fairly be understood. Apparently little events—what worlds of good or evil may turn on them! IV. SOLUTION OF THE MYSTERIES OF LIFE. They go to the man for the colt. Would not common sense ask, What have you to do with the colt? Simply, "The Master hath need of him." You have a favourite daughter. One day she is not well—only a cold, you think. But she grows feverish, and you call in the doctor. Doctor prescribes, but still the sweet one sickens; and one day in his solemn look the mother reads the hard sentence—her child must die. Why is it? "The Lord hath need of it." (*J. B.*

Meharry, B.A.) *One Lord* :—"The Lord our God is one Lord," so there may be no debate about the direction of our worship, about the Owner of our powers, about the Redeemer of our souls. See how this operates in practical life. The disciples might naturally feel some little difficulty about going to take another's man's property; so the Lord said unto them, "If any man say ought unto you, ye shall say the Lord hath need of them, and straightway he will send them." But suppose there had been a thousand lords, the question would have arisen, which of them? But there is **one** Lord, and His name is the key which opens every lock; His name is the mighty power which beats down every mountain and every wall, and makes the rough places plain. What poetry there is here! Why, this is the very poetry of faith. It is not mere faith; it is faith in flower, faith in blossom, faith in victory! (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

The fulfilment of minute prophecies :—"Not the fulfilment of sublime predictions, so called; but the fulfilment of little, specific, minute, detailed prophecies. God does nothing unnecessarily, speaks nothing that seems exaggeration or superabundance. There is a meaning in the most delicate tint with which He hath varied any leaf; there is a significance in the tiniest drop of dew which ever sphered itself in beauty on the eyelids of the morning. And that Christ should go into Jerusalem upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass! That is not decorative talk; that is not mere flowery prophecy, or incidental or tributary foretelling. In all that we should account little and of inconsequential moment is fulfilled to the letter. What then? If God be careful of such crumbs of prophecy, such little detailed lines of prediction, what of the life of His children, the redeemed life of His Church? If not one tittle could fall to the ground respecting things of this kind—matters of order, arrangement, sequence—is He unrighteous to forget the greater when He remembers the less? Will He count the hairs upon your head, and let the head itself be bruised? Will He paint the grass, and let the man fall to decay? Is He careful about birds floating in the air, and careless about lives redeemed by the sacrificial blood of His Son? (*Ibid.*) *Ownership* :—"A nobleman who had a magnificent garden was ill in bed, and ordered his butler to go into the hot-house and bring him the finest bunch of grapes he could find. He came to the hot-house, he opened the door, he examined all the clusters—he fixed on the best—he brought out his knife and cut it. Just as he did so, a cry was raised, 'There's a man in the hot-house! there's a man in the hot-house!'" The gardeners, young and old, dropped their spades and water-pots, and ran to the hot-house. As they glanced through the glass, sure enough, there stood the man, and in his hand the Queen Cluster—the very one which they had been watching for months—the one which was to take the prize at the Horticultural Show! They were furious—they were ready to kill him—they rushed in and seized him by the collar, "What are you about!" they said, "How dare you!—you thief!—you rascal!—you vagabond!" Why does not he turn pale?—why does he keep so cool?—why does he smile? He says something—the gardeners are silent in a moment—they hang their heads—they look ashamed—they ask his pardon—they go back to their work. What did he say to make such a sudden change? Simply this—"Men! my lord bade me come here and cut him the very finest bunch of grapes I could find." That was it! The gardeners felt that the hot-house, the vine, and every cluster on it was his. They might call it theirs, and propose to do this and that with it—but really and truly it was his who built the house, and bought the vine, and paid them for attending to it. Just so, dear children, the Lord has a claim on all we possess; our souls, our bodies, our tongues, our time, our talents, our memories, our money, our influence, our beloved relatives. "Ye are not your own"; and whenever He has need of anything we must let it go"—we must learn to yield it up to Him as cheerfully as the owner yielded up his colt. (*J. Bolton, B.A.*) *Why we are careful to God* :—"Why was it?" asked Mrs. N— of her own heart as she was walking homewards from the communion-table. "Why was it?" she almost unconsciously exclaimed aloud. "Oh, I wish somebody could tell me!" "Could tell you what?" said a pleasant voice behind her, and looking around, she saw her pastor and his wife approaching. "Could you tell me," said she, "why the Saviour died for us? I have never heard it answered to my satisfaction. You will say it was because He loved us; but why was that love? He certainly did not need us, and in our sinful state there was nothing in us to attract His love." "I may suppose, Mrs. N—," said her pastor, "that it would be no loss for you to lose your deformed little babe. You have a large circle of friends, you have other children, and a kind husband. You do not need the deformed child; and what use is it?" "Oh, sir," said Mrs. N—, "I could not part with my poor child. I do need him."

I need his love. I would rather die than fail of receiving it." "Well," said her pastor, "does God love His children less than earthly, sinful parents do?" "I never looked upon it in that way before," said Mrs. N—. (*Christian Age.*) *Every good man is needful to complete God's design*:—An expert mechanician constructs a certain axle, tempered and burnished, to fit the hub of a certain wheel, which again he fashions as elaborately to fit the axle, so that a microscope detects no flaw; and now nothing can take the place of either but itself; and each is labour lost without the other. True, they are only an axle and a wheel, each a single one, a minute one, a fragile one; not costly in material, nor remarkable in structure; but in the absence of either, the *chronometer* which should decide the arrival of England's fleet at Trafalgar must hang motionless. Every good man is such a fragmentary and related instrument in the hands of God. He is never for an hour an isolated thing. He belongs to a system of things in which everything is dovetailed to another thing. Yet no two are duplicates. Nothing can ever be spared from it. The system has no holidays. Through man's most dreamless slumbers it moves on, without waiting for delinquents. (*Austin Phelps.*) **Blessed be the King that cometh.** *Jesus our meek and humble King*:—I. **OUR KING IN HUMILITY.** 1. Jesus is our King. (1) The prophecies announce Him as such. (Isa. ix. 6; Zech. ix. 9.) (2) He avowed Himself a King. (Matt. xi. 27; John xviii. 37.) (3) He proved by the power of His will that He was a King. (Matt. xxi. 3.) 2. Jesus is our humble King. (1) He refused royal honours. (John vi. 15.) (2) In opposition to the presumption of the Jews, He would never act nor appear as King. (John xviii. 36.) (2) He debased Himself in all humility. 3. Follow Him in His humility. (1) By contrition and a sincere confession of your sins. (2) By resignation in adversities. (3) By humility in earthly happiness. II. **OUR MECK KING.** This may be seen—1. From the purpose of His coming—of His Incarnation. He comes as a Friend and Saviour; and wants to be loved, not feared. 2. From His earthly life. (1) He was full of love and mercy towards the suffering, whom He invited to come to Him. (2) He was full of mercy and tenderness towards sinners and His own enemies. 3. From the experience of your own life. Jesus came to you as a meek King—(1) In your afflictions, to console you. (2) In your sins, which He bore in patience. (3) In your conversion, the work of His mercy. Strip yourself of the old man with his deeds, as the Jews stripped themselves of their garments, and let Jesus walk over your former self. 4. Learn of your King to be meek of heart also. (Matt. xi. 29.) (1) As a superior towards your subjects. (2) Towards sinners and your enemies. (3) In tribulations and afflictions. (*Stauss.*) *Praise thy God, O Zion*:—I. First, we shall observe here **DELIGHTFUL PRAISE**. In the thirty-seventh verse every word is significant, and deserves the careful notice of all who would learn aright the lesson of how to magnify the Saviour. 1. To begin with, the praise rendered to Christ was speedy praise. The happy choristers did not wait till He had entered the city, but "when He was come nigh, even now, at the descent of the Mount of Olives, they began to rejoice." It is well to have a quick eye to perceive occasions for gratitude. 2. It strikes us at once, also, that this was unanimous praise. Observe, not only the multitude, but the whole multitude of the disciples rejoiced, and praised Him; not one silent tongue among the disciples—not one who withheld his song. And yet, I suppose, those disciples had their trials as we have ours. 3. Next, it was multitudinous. "The whole multitude." There is something most inspiring and exhilarating in the noise of a multitude singing God's praises. 4. Still it is worthy of observation that, while the praise was multitudinous, it was quite select. It was the whole multitude "of the disciples." The Pharisees did not praise Him—they were murmuring. All true praise must come from true hearts. If thou dost not learn of Christ, thou canst not render to Him acceptable song. 5. Then, in the next place, you will observe that the praise they rendered was joyful praise. "The whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice." I hope the doctrine that Christians ought to be gloomy will soon be driven out of the universe. 6. The next point we must mention is, that it was demonstrative praise. They praised Him with their voices, and with a loud voice. If not with loud voices actually in sound, yet we would make the praise of God loud by our actions, which speak louder than any words; we would extol Him by great deeds of kindness, and love, and self-denial, and zeal, that so our actions may assist our words. 7. The praise rendered, however, though very demonstrative, was very reasonable; the reason is given—"for all the mighty works that they had seen." We have seen many mighty works which Christ has done. 8. With another remark, I shall close this first head—the reason for their

joy was a personal ore. There is no praise to God so sweet as that which flows from the man who has tasted that the Lord is gracious. II. I shall now lead you on to the second point—their praise found vent for itself in AN APPROPRIATE SONG. “Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.” 1. It was an appropriate song, if you will remember that it had Christ for its subject. 2. This was an appropriate song, in the next place, because it had God for its object; they extolled God, God in Christ, when they thus lifted up their voices. 3. An appropriate song, because it had the universe for its scope. The multitude sung of peace in heaven, as though the angels were established in their peaceful seats by the Saviour, as though the war which God had waged with sin was over now, because the conquering King was come. Oh, let us seek after music which shall be fitted for other spheres! I would begin the music here, and so my soul should rise. Oh, for some heavenly notes to bear my passions to the skies! It was appropriate to the occasion, because the universe was its sphere. 4. And it seems also to have been most appropriate, because it had gratitude for its spirit. III. Thirdly, and very briefly—for I am not going to give much time to these men—we have INTRUSIVE OBJECTIONS. “Master, rebuke Thy disciples.” But why did these Pharisees object? 1. I suppose it was, first of all, because they thought there would be no praise for them. 2. They were jealous of the people. 3. They were jealous of Jesus. IV. We come now to the last point, which is this—AN UNANSWERABLE ARGUMENT. He said, “If these should hold their peace, the very stones would cry out.” Brethren, I think that is very much our case; if we were not to praise God, the very stones might cry out against us. We must praise the Lord. Woe is unto us if we do not! It is impossible for us to hold our tongues. Saved from hell and be silent! Secure of heaven and be ungrateful! Bought with precious blood, and hold our tongues! Filled with the Spirit and not speak! (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The triumphal entry*:—Christ’s triumphal entrance into Jerusalem is one of the most noted scenes in gospel story. It is a sun-burst in the life of the Son of Man. It is a typical coronation. It is a fore-gleam of that coming day when Jesus shall be enthroned by the voice of the universe. I. THE SCENE. II. THE CHIEF LESSON INCULCATED BY THE SCENE: ENTHUSIASM SHOULD BE CONSECRATED TO THE SERVICE OF CHRIST. There was feeling and thrill and deep life and outbursting emotion in the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, and He approved it all. I argue for the equipment of enthusiasm in the service of Christ. There should be a fervency of spirit that will radiate both light and heat. The faculties should be on fire. There are higher moods and lower moods in the Christian life, just as there are higher moods and lower moods in the intellectual life. Every scholar knows that there are such things as inspirational moods, when all the faculties awaken and kindle and glow; when the heart burns within; when the mind is automatic, and works without a spur; when the mental life is intense: when all things seem possible; when the very best in the man puts itself into the product of his pen; when the judgment is quick and active, the reason clear and far-seeing, and the conscience keen and sensitive. These are the moods in which we glory. These are the moods which give the world its long-lived masterpieces. These are the moods which we wish to enthrone in the memories of our friends. You remember Charles Dickens’s charming story, “David Copperfield.” In it there is pictured the parting that took place between the two young men, Steerforth and Copperfield. Young Steerforth, putting both hands upon Copperfield’s shoulders, says: “Let us make this bargain! If circumstances should separate us, and you should see me no more, remember me at my best.” Steerforth is only a type of us all. Every one of us wishes to be remembered at his best. I argue for man’s best in the religious life. Man is at his best only when he is enthusiastic. Enthusiasm is power. It is the locomotive so full of steam that it hisses at every crack and crevice and joint. Such a locomotive carries the train with the speed of wind through hill and over valley. It has been enthusiasm that has carried the Christian Church through the attainments of ages. By enthusiasm, when it is in an eminent degree, men propagate themselves upon others in matters of taste, of affection, and of religion. Iron cannot be welded at a low temperature. There must be heat, and then you can weld iron to iron. So you cannot weld natures to each other when they are at a low temperature. Mind cannot take hold of mind nor faculty of faculty, when they are not in a glow. But when they are in a glow they can. We see this exemplified in society. Hundreds and hundreds of men, who are rich in learning, ponderous in mental equipment, ample in philosophical power, who are low in degree of temperature, and who labour all their life, achieve

but little. You see right by the side of these men, men who have no comparison with them in native power or in culture, but who have simplicity, straightforwardness, and, above all, intensity, and what of them? Why, this: they are eminent in accomplishing results. There are people, I know, who have an antipathy to enthusiasm and emotion in religion. They object that we cannot rely upon enthusiasm. They forget that if it spring from the grace of God it has an inexhaustible fountain. One hour enthusiastic people cry "Hosanna"; but the next hour they cry "Crucify." I deny that the hosanna people of Jerusalem ever cried "crucify." The charge that they did is without a single line of Scripture as a basis. Peter and James and John, and men of that class, did they cry "crucify"? Yet the hosanna people were made up of such. In a city in which there were gathered from all parts of the nation not less than two millions, there were certainly enough people of diverse minds to create two parties diametrically opposed, without requiring us to slander the grace of enthusiasm, and circulate false reports about the hosanna people. I stand by the hosanna people, and fearlessly assert that there is no proof against their integrity. Enthusiasm! That is what the Church needs. It is only the enthusiast who succeeds. Enter the history of the cause of Christ, and there also will you find the statement borne out. What was Paul, the chief of Christian workers, but an enthusiast? Rob Paul of his enthusiasm, and you blot out of existence the churches of Corinth and Ephesus and Galatia and Thessalonica and Troas. Rob him of his enthusiasm and you annihilate the Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians, and the Pastoral Epistles. This day of palm branches has been duplicated and reduplicated ever since the triumphal entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem, and this reduplication will continue until Jesus is ultimately and for ever crowned on the great day of final consummation. The world is full of hosannas to the Son of David. The humble Christian school of the missionary in foreign lands is a hosanna sounding through the darkness of heathendom. The philanthropic institution that rises into sight all over Christendom is a hosanna to the Son of David echoing through civilization. The gorgeous cathedral, standing like a mountain of beauty, is a hosanna to the Son of David worked into stone and echoing itself in the realm of art. The holy life of every disciple, which is seen on every continent of the earth, is a hosanna to the Son of David ringing throughout all humanity. These hosannas shall be kept until the end come, and then all the universe of God's redeemed will peal forth the grand Hallel in the hearing of eternity. (*David Gregg.*) *Enthusiasm in religion*:—What is your religion if it have no enthusiasm in it? Who wants a wooden Christianity or a logical Christianity only? Christianity loses its power when it loses its pathos. Every religion goes downward when it loses the power of exciting the highest, most intelligent, and most courageous enthusiasm. Some of us have need to be cautioned against decorum. Alas! there are some Christian professors who do not know what it is to have a moment of transport and ecstasy, unutterable emotion—who never, never go away upon the wings of light and hope, but are always standing, almost shivering—eating up their dry logic, and never knowing where the blossom, the poetry, and the ecstasy may be found. Christianity should excite our emotion and make us sometimes talk rapturously, and give us, sometimes at least, moments of inspiration, self-deliverance, and victory. It was so in the case before us. The whole city was moved. There was passion, there was excitement on every hand. But, then, am I advocating nothing but emotion, sensibility, enthusiasm? Far from it. First of all, let there be intelligent apprehension, and profound conviction respecting truth. Let us see that our foundations, theological and ethical, are deep, broad, immovable. Then let us carry up the building until it breaks out into glittering points, far-flashing pinnacles, and becomes broken into beauty. (*Ibid.*) *The coming King*:—I. THE ESTIMATE FORMED OF OUR LORD BY THE CROWD. "King." II. HIS CREDENTIALS. "In the name of the Lord." Divine commission attested. 1. By His words. 2. By His works. III. THE BLESSINGS WHICH COME WITH THE KING. "Peace" and "glory." IV. THESE BLESSINGS ACCOMPANY EVERY ADVENT OF "THE KING THAT COMETH IN THE NAME OF THE LORD." 1. It was so at His first coming. 2. It shall be so at His second coming. It is so when the King comes to reign in the sinner's heart. (*J. Treanor, B.A.*) *Hosannas to Jesus*:—I. THAT WHICH MAKES MEN ILLUSTRIOUS, AND WORTHY OF DISTINCTION—lofty genius, heroism, expansive benevolence, mighty achievements—all that intensified and sublimely illustrated to a degree infinitely beyond what is possible to attainment by ordinary mortals, DISTINGUISHES THE LORD JESUS, AND ENTITLES HIM TO OUR HOMAGE AND

PRASE. Take—1. Genius. What is genius? Genius originates, invents, creates. Talent reproduces that which has been, and still is. The spindles in our mills, the locomotives in our shops represent genius. The swift play of the one, and the majestic tread of the other across the continents on paths of steel, is genius in motion. Now turn the light of these definitions upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and see if He has not genius worthy of our best praise. It were folly to deny creative genius to Him, by whose word the worlds sprang into being, and by whose power they continue to exist. It were folly to deny originality to the Alpha and Omega of all mind and matter, life and spirit. Folly again to deny superior intellectual acumen to Him, who is the light of all intellect, the inspirer of all right thought, the incentive to all noble action. The blind saw, and the deaf heard, and the dumb spake, and the dead awoke. As to the modifying influence which Coleridge says is implied in the highest type of genius, it has been truly affirmed: "The genius of Christ, exerted through His gospel in which His Spirit presides, has made itself felt in all the different relations and modifications of life. Take the next element of distinction that men applaud. 2. Heroism. Spontaneous is the homage paid to heroes. In some lands they are deified and worshipped. Heroism! Produce another example, such as Jesus of Nazareth, from the long list of the world's illustrious! Take the next quality in lofty manhood that men extol—3. Benevolence. Of this Jesus was the perfect personification. 4. Wonderful achievement receives applause from men. The multitude praised God "for all the mighty works that they had seen." Our works may be good, Christ's are mighty as well as good. We visit the sick, Christ cures them. II. HIS PRAISES HAVE BEEN SUNG IN ALL AGES, ON ACCOUNT OF HIS WORTHINESS OF ALL HOMAGE IN HEAVEN AND IN EARTH. Abraham, the representative of the patriarchal age, looked forward to His day with glad anticipations, and praised the promised seed. Jacob, in his dying predictions, sang of the Shiloh, and waited for His salvation. Moses chose for the subject of his eulogy the Prophet like unto himself, unto whom the people should hearken. David in exalted strains sang of His character and works, His trials and triumphs, His kingdom and glory, and died exulting, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting and to everlasting. Let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen." The prophets all rejoiced in Zion's delivery and Judah's King. At His birth, angels and shepherds and sages sang His praises. As in some of the old monasteries one choir of monks relieved another choir in order that the service of praise might not cease, so as one generation of the children of God has retired to its rest, another has caught up the glad strains of hosannas to Christ, and in this way they have been perpetuated down the centuries. III. THERE ARE THOSE, HOWEVER, WHO WOULD INTERRUPT THE PRAISES OF GOD'S PEOPLE: YEA, WORSE, SUPPRESS THEM ALTOGETHER. We learn from our text that this was the desire of the Pharisees on this occasion. Thus, the wicked and unbelieving now would stop all ascriptions of praise to Christ. They would quench the flames of devotion that the Holy Ghost kindles in the hearts of believers. "Praise Nature! Sing odes to the landscape! Worship the beautiful in what your eyes see, the tangible, that of which you have positive knowledge through the certification of your senses! Don't be wasting your devotion on the unseen, the unknowable, the mythical, the intangible!"—so says the Agnostic. "Do homage to Reason! Let Reason be the object of your worship; its cultivation the effort of your life! What wonders it has accomplished in science and philosophy!"—so says the Rationalist. "Sing of wine, feasting, sensuality! Bacchus is our god. Praise him! Worship him!" says the Profligate. "Sing of wars, and of victories, and of conquests! Apollo is the god whom we worship, and whose praises we resound. Therefore, spread your palms with pæans of triumph at the feet of victors!"—so say Conquerors. Standing erect, with his thumbs thrust in the arm-holes of his vest, his chest thrown forward and his head backward, like an oily, overfed, bigoted Pharisee, "Sing of me," says the Self-Righteous. "Praise the Saviour!" says the believer, and the call receives a response. (N. H. Van Arsdale.) The stones would immediately cry out.—*Guilty silence in Christ's cause*:—I. Our Saviour means to intimate, that this SILENCE WOULD BE VILE. Let us, then, proceed with this dismal business, and arraign this fearful silence. 1. We tax it, first, with the most culpable ignorance. If you found a man, who was entirely insensible to Milton's "Paradise Lost," or Cowper's "Task," dead to the touches of Raffael's pencil, to all the beautiful and sublime scenery of nature, to all that is illustrious and inspiring in human disposition and action, you would be ready to say, "Why, this senselessness is enough to make a stone speak." But where are we now? Men

may be undeserving of the praise they obtain; or if the praise be deserved in the reality, it may be excessive in the degree; but there can be no excess here. It is impossible to ascribe titles too magnificent, attributes too exalted, adorations too intense, to Him who is "fairer than the children of men," who is the "chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." Now to be insensible to such a Being as this, argues, not merely a want of intellectual, but of moral taste, and evinces, not only ignorance, but depravity. He who died, not for a country, but for the world, and for a world of enemies—He awakens no emotion, no respect. Shame, shame! 2. We charge this silence, secondly, with the blackest ingratitude. I need not enlarge on this hateful vice. The proverb says, "Call a man ungrateful, and you call him everything that is bad." The Lacedæmonians punished ingratitude. "The ungrateful," says Locke, "are like the sea; continually receiving the refreshing showers of heaven, and turning them all into salt." "The ungrateful," says South, "are like the grave; always receiving, and never returning." But nothing can equal your ingratitude, if you are silent. For you will observe, that other beneficiaries may have some claim upon their benefactors, from a community of nature or from the command of God; but we have no claim, we are unworthy of the least of all His mercies. 3. We tax this silence with shameful cruelty. We are bound to do all the good in our power. If we have ourselves received the knowledge of Christ, we are bound to impart it. If the inhabitants of a village were dying of a disease, and you had the remedy, and held your peace; if you saw a fellow-creature going to drink a deadly poison, and instead of warning him you held your peace; if you saw even a poor stranger going to pass over a deep and deadly river, upon a broken bridge, and you knew that a little lower down there was a marble one, and you held your peace; is there a person, that would ever pass you without standing still and looking round upon you and exclaiming, "You detestable wretch, you infamous villain, you ought not to live!" "If these should hold their peace, the stones would cry out." How is it, then, that we have so much less moral feeling than the lepers had, when they said, "This is a good day," and reflecting upon their starving babes said, "If we altogether hold our peace, some evil will befall us; let us therefore go and tell the king's household"? II. Secondly, our Saviour seems to intimate, that THIS SILENCE IS DIFFICULT. Now we often express a difficulty by an obvious impossibility. The Jews said, "Let Him come down from the cross, and we will believe on Him." Their meaning was, that they could not believe on Him; for the condition seemed to them impossible. The Saviour here says, "You impose silence upon these disciples, but this is impossible; yes, they will hold their peace when dumb nature shall become vocal, and not before." "If these should hold their peace, the stones would cry out;" that is, their principles will actuate them, their feelings must have operation and utterance. If you could enter heaven, you would find that there He attracts every eye, and fills every heart, and employs every tongue. And in the Church below there is a degree of the same inspiration. 1. The impressions that Christ makes upon His people by conviction are very powerful. 2. The impressions He produces by hope are very powerful. 3. The impressions He produces by love are very powerful. He so attaches His disciples to Himself by esteem and gratitude, as to induce them to come out of the world, to deny themselves, to take up their cross, and to be willing to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. III. Our Saviour here intimates further, that THIS SILENCE WOULD BE USELESS. "If," says He, "those of whom you complain were to hold their peace, you would gain nothing by their silence; there would not be a cessation of My praise, but only a change of instruments and voices; rather than My praise should be suspended, what they decline others would be sure to rise up to perform; if these should hold their peace, the stones would cry out." 1. First, we shall glance at the supposed silence. 2. And, secondly, observe the improbable instruments that are employed to perpetuate the testimony. It is not said, "If these should hold their peace the angels would cry out, men would cry out"; no; "the stones would cry out." Can stones live? can stones preach and write and translate the Scriptures? Can they aid in carrying on such a cause as this? Why not? He can employ, and often does employ, the most unlikely characters. The wrath of man praiseth Him. We see this in the case of Henry the Eighth. It is of great importance to know whether we are God's servants, or whether we are God's enemies; but as to Him, He can employ one as well as another. This was the case with Saul of Tarsus. He was a persecutor once; but then he was called by Divine grace, and preach the faith that once he endeavoured to destroy. All the Lord's people once were enemies: but He found a way into their hearts, and He

made them friends. They were all once "stones"; but of these stones God has "raised up children unto Abraham." They were as hard as stones, as insensible as stones, as cold as stones; but they are now flesh, and every feeling of this flesh is alive to God. 3. Thirdly, notice the readiness of their appearance. "If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." "The King's business requires haste"; both because of its importance, and the fleeting uncertainty of the period in which He will allow it to be performed. 4. Then, lastly, observe the certainty of their appearance, when they become necessary. The certainty of the end infers the certainty of all that is intermediately necessary to it. Upon this principle, our Saviour here speaks; it is, I am persuaded, the very spirit of the passage. "My praise"—as if He should say—"must prevail; and therefore means must be forthcoming to accomplish it, and to carry it on." Let us, first, apply this certainty as the prevention of despair. Secondly; as a check to vanity and pride. My brethren in the ministry, we are not—no, we are not essential to the Redeemer's cause. We are not the Atlases upon which the Church depends; the government is upon His shoulders who filleth all in all. Thirdly; as a spur and diligence and zeal. (*W. Jay.*) *All ought to praise God:*—Have we not heard, or have I not told you years ago, of some great conductor of a musical festival suddenly throwing up his baton and stopping the proceedings, saying "Flageolette!" The flageolette was not doing its part of the great musical utterance. The conductor had an ear that heard every strain and tone. You and I probably would have heard only the great volume of music, and would have been glad to listen with entranced attention to its invisible charm, but the man who was all ear noted the absence of one instrument, and throwing up his baton, he said, "Flageolet." Stop till we get all that is within us into this musical offering. So I want our hymn of praise to be sung by every man, by every power in his soul. (*J. Parker, D.D.*)

Vers. 41-44. **He beheld the city, and wept over it.**—*Christ weeping over Jerusalem:*—I. THE EXCLAMATION OF CHRIST, AND HIS TEARS IN THEIR REJECTION TO THE GUILTY CITY. 1. He remembered days of old. On these sinners the object of His mission seemed entirely lost. 2. But with the self-denying love of a patriot, and the grace of a Saviour, He looked beyond His own sufferings, and fixed His eye on theirs. What an appeal to His pity was there! The city was beleaguered and lost—the dwelling of Holiness was laid waste. 3. The sentence is broken and incomplete. It is eloquently completed by the tears, which are the natural language of compassion, and express its intentness beyond all words. What the present might have been! II. THE BEARING OF THE RECORD ON OURSELVES. 1. There are things which pre-eminently belong to your peace. 2. The period allotted to you for attending to them is definite and brief. 3. Should your day close, and leave you unsaved, your guilt will be great, and your condition remediless. 4. This is a spectacle calling for the profoundest lamentation. 5. The tears of Jesus prove His unextinguished compassion for the guilty. (*John Harris.*) *The tears of Jesus:*—I. LOST PRIVILEGES.—"Oh, that thou hadst known the things which belong unto thy peace." II. LOST OPPORTUNITIES.—"Even thou in this thy day. Nations and men have their day: 1. Youth. 2. Special occasions, as Confirmation 3. Religious strivings within our own manifold opportunities, which may be prized and used, or neglected and abused. III. LOST SOULS.—"But now they are hid from thine eyes." (*Clerical World.*) *Jesus weeping over perishing sinners:*—I. THAT GOSPEL BLESSINGS ARE CONDUCTIVE TO THE PEACE OF MANKIND. They are the things which belong unto our peace. Here let us more particularly observe—1. What those things are to which our Lord refers. The blessings of grace in this world. Deliverance—from bondage, condemnation, and guilty fears (*Psa. cxvi. 16; Isa. xii. 1; Psa. xxxiv. 4*); and holiness—both of heart and life (*Obadiah 17; Rom. vi. 22*). The blessings of glory in the eternal state. An eternal life of rest, felicity, honour, and security (*Rom. ii. 6, 7*). 2. How these things are conducive to our peace. They belong unto our peace as they produce sweet tranquillity of mind (*Ecc. ii. 26*). This arises from peace with God (*Rom. v. 1*); peace of conscience (*2 Cor. i. 12*); a peaceable disposition (*James iii. 18*); the joy of victory (*Rom. viii. 37; 1 Cor. xv. 57*); and the joy of hope (*Rom. v. 2, and xiv. 17*). Our text teaches us—II. THAT THESE BLESSINGS MUST BE KNOWN TO BE ENJOYED. "Oh that thou hadst known," &c. The knowledge thus necessary must be—1. A speculative knowledge; that is, we must have a correct view of them as they are exhibited in God's Word—For we are naturally without them (*Rom. iii. 16-18*). We must seek them to

obtain them (Job xxii. 21; Isa. xxvii. 5). And we must understand them in order that we may seek them aright: we must understand the nature of them; the necessity of them; and the way to obtain them (Prov. xix. 2). The knowledge here required must also be—2. An experimental knowledge. This is evident—From the testimony of inspired apostles (2 Cor. v. 1; xiii. 5; 1 John v. 19). And from the nature of gospel blessings; spiritual sight, liberty, and health, must be experienced to be enjoyed. Our text teaches us—III. THAT A SEASON IS AFFORDED US FOR ACQUIRING THE KNOWLEDGE OF THESE BLESSINGS. 1. This season is here called our day, because it is the time in which we are called to labour for the blessings of peace (John vi. 27; Phil. ii. 12; 13; 2 Peter iii. 14). 2. This season is favourable for seeking the things here recommended; for they are set before us (Deut. xxx. 19, 29); we have strength promised to seek them with (Isa. xl. 31); and we have light to seek them in (John xii. 36). Hence, we should also recollect—3. This season is limited; it is only a day. Our text also teaches us, with respect to gospel blessings—IV. THAT IT IS GOD'S WILL THEY SHOULD BE ENJOYED BY US. This is certain. 1. From the wish of Christ—"O that thou hadst known," &c. Such a wish we find often repeated by God in His Word, and expressed in the kindest manner; see Deut. v. 29, xxxii. 29; Isa. xlviii. 18. 2. From the tears of Christ. These demonstrate the sincerity of His wish (Deut. xxxii. 4); the great importance of godliness (1 Tim. iv. 8); and the dreadful doom of impenitent sinners (Rom. ii. 8, 9). 3. From the visitations of Christ. He visited us by His incarnation; and He still visits us by the strivings of His Spirit, the gifts of His providence, and the ministry of His Word. V. THAT ALL WHO SEEK THESE BLESSINGS ARIGHT WILL OBTAIN THEM. VI. THAT THE REJECTION OF THESE BLESSINGS IS PUNISHED WITH DESTRUCTION. (*Theological Sketch-book.*) *The tears of Jesus*:—We are told three times of Christ weeping: in this passage; in John xi. 35; in Heb. v. 7. 1. JESUS WEPT IN SYMPATHY WITH OTHERS. At Bethany. 1. It is not sinful to weep under affliction. 2. The mourner may always count on the sympathy of Jesus. 3. When our friends are mourning, we should weep with them. II. THE TEAR OF JESUS' COMPASSION. Text. 1. Observe the privileges which were granted the Jews, and neglected. 2. Observe the sorrow of Jesus for the lost. III. THE TEARS OF PERSONAL SUFFERING. Probably the Agony in Gethsemane is alluded to in Heb. v. 7. 1. Think not that because you suffer you are not chosen. 2. Nor that you are not a Christian because you feel weak. (*W. Taylor, D.D.*) *The tears of Jesus*:—I. Our Lord, by His tears over Jerusalem proclaims to us THE DUTY OF LOOKING AT THE THINGS OF THIS WORLD IN THEIR TRUE LIGHT, of estimating all that surrounds us, not as it appears to the hope, the fear, the enthusiasm, the pride of many, but as it is viewed in the sight of God, whose judgment shall alone stand, when the false standards and false excitements of the moment have passed for ever away. His tears speak to us the same lesson which He elsewhere taught in words, "Judge not after the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." For there was apparently little to draw forth the tears of our Blessed Lord at that moment. And is it not so now, my brethren? Do we not exult and rejoice in things, and persons, and scenes which would call forth only tears from our Saviour? Oh that we may strive to see things in their true light—that is, in the light of the eternity in which we shall soon find ourselves! oh that we may estimate them, not by the standards of sense and time, but in the true balance of God's unerring judgment! II. And, secondly, we see, as from other passages of Holy Scripture, THE EXCEEDING SINFULNESS OF SIN, in that sin has the power of calling forth tears from the Saviour in the midst of so much exultation and beauty. Ah! my brethren, nothing is so truly mournful as sin. It is the great evil of life; neither poverty, nor sickness, nor slanderous words, nor the contempt of the world, have any real sting in them apart from this. Take sin away, and the world becomes a Paradise. Take sin away, and the lives of the unfortunate are filled with happiness. It is sin which has cast a blight over existence on every side of us: trace each form of suffering and sorrow around you to its ultimate source, and you will find that source to be sin. Alas! brethren, there are many who come to Church, Sunday after Sunday, and even approach the Holy Communion, and yet know nothing of their own hearts, and the deadly poison of unrepented sin, which dwells within them, and the real peril in which their souls are placed. (*S. W. Sheffington, M.A.*) *Christ weeping over Jerusalem*:—Tears, looked at materially, admit a very ready explanation; they are secreted by a gland, they are drawn from the fluids of the body, and are rounded and brought down by the law of gravitation. The poets give the spiritual meaning, when they call tears the blood of the wounds of the soul, the leaves of the plant of

sorrow, the hail and rain of life's winter, the safety-valves of the heart under pressure, the vent of anguish-showers blown up by the tempests of the soul. If God had a body He would weep. God does grieve, and if He had a corporeal nature, tears would not be inconsistent with all the recognized attributes of Deity. There is an eloquence in tears which is irresistible. There is a sacredness in tears which almost forbids the discussion of weeping. There is a dignity in tears which makes them consistent with the utmost intelligence and strength and nobility of character. There are men with hard heads, cold hearts, good digestion, and full purses, who know nothing of tears; but he who values true manhood and spiritual riches will not envy such men. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." 1. Jesus wept as a man, as the man Christ Jesus, as the perfect man Christ Jesus. "Behold the man." To the utmost extent of human sadness was Jesus grieved, when "He beheld the city, and wept over it." 2. Jesus wept as a Jew. The broadest love may be discriminating, and may include strong individual attachments. Jesus was interested in every land and in every race. No land or race was shut out from His heart. But there were special attachments to Palestine, and strong ties to the holy city. 3. Jesus wept as a teacher. Light had come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. And this was the condemnation. He was conscious of a pure heart in His teaching, and He saw the corruption of the human heart in the rejection and contempt of His instructions. 4. Jesus wept as a foreteller, as a prophet. He who was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person, declared the mind and will and heart of God, when, beholding this doomed city, He wept over it. 5. Jesus wept as the Messiah. He was the woman's seed promised in Paradise. He was the Shiloh seen by Jacob. He was the prophet revealed to Moses. He was the Prince of peace spoken of by Isaiah. To Him gave all the prophets witness. The law was His shadow. Much was written in the Psalms and prophets concerning Him. His history and character, His words and works, fulfilled various scriptures written by inspired men. His claim to the Messiahship was distinct and full and clear. Yet He was despised and rejected of men. Yet when He came to His own, His own received Him not. This was a sorrow for His Father's sake. He was the fulfilment of His Father's ancient and oft-repeated promise. He was His Father's unspeakable gift. What a requital of infinite and eternal love! And this was a sorrow for the people's sake. Instead of receiving Him they were looking for another. But Jesus knew that their eyes would fail by looking in vain. 6. Jesus wept as a Saviour. He looked upon those who would not be saved, and wept over them. Measure His sorrow by His knowledge and by His hatred of sin; measure His sorrow by His own freedom from sin; measure His sorrow by the love of His great heart. To see evil, and to be unable to remedy it, is anguish; but to see evil, and to be able and willing to remove it, and to be baffled by the wilfulness and waywardness of the sufferer or of the evil-doer, is anguish keener and deeper still. Jesus knew all this when "He beheld the city, and wept over it." 7. Jesus wept as God manifest in flesh. The God grieved and the man wept. The Divine nature does suffer, and these tears reveal the fact. The whole nature of the Christ, the Redeemer of men, was sad, when Jesus on this occasion wept. These tears, then, were the tears of a man, a patriot, a teacher, and a prophet. They were the tears of the Messiah and the Saviour and the God-man. They were both human and divine, tears of pity and patriotism, tears of sympathy and of displeasure, tears of a wounded spirit and of a loving soul. (*S. Martin, D.D.*) *The tears of Jesus*.—1. The tears of Jesus Christ are compassionate tears. Like His heavenly Father, He has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. The office of the Judge is not His willing office. It made Him sorrowful to see men sin. It made Him sorrowful to see men reject the gospel. It made Him sorrowful to see men choose their own misery. 2. Again, the tears of Jesus are admonitory warning—some have even called them terrible tears. He would not have wept, I think we may say with confidence, merely because a little pain, or a little suffering, or even a little anguish and misery, lay before us. He shrank not from pain: He endured suffering—yea, the death of the Cross. He faced anguish and misery, and flinched not. There was only one thing which Jesus Christ could not endure—or, if He endured it for an hour Himself, certainly could not advise others, nor bear others, to encounter without Him—and that was the real displeasure, the prolonged hiding of the countenance, the actual, terrible, punitive wrath of God. It was because He foresaw that for impenitent, obstinate, obdurate sinners, that He wept these bitter tears. I call them admonitory tears; I will even consent to call them

terrific tears. They seem to say to us, "Oh, presume not too far!" '3. I will add another thing. The tears of Jesus were exemplary tears. As He wept, so ought we to weep. We ought to weep tears of sorrow over our sins. We ought to weep tears of repentance over our past lives, over our many short-comings and backslidings, omissions of good and commissions of evil, lingering rebelling obstinate sins, cold poor languishing dying graces. But more than this. We ought to weep more exactly as He wept. He wept not for Himself: so also, in our place, should we. 4. I will add, without comment, a fourth word—the tears of Jesus Christ are consolatory tears. Yes, this, in all their accents, is the sweet undersong—Jesus Christ cares for us. The tears of Jesus are, above all else, consolatory. They say to us, "Provision is made for you." They say to us, "It is not of Christ, it is not of God, if you perish." They say to us, "Escape for your life—because a better, and a higher, and a happier life is here for you!" (*Dean Vaughan*). *Christ weeping over sinners*.—1. WHAT OUR LORD DID: "He beheld the city, and wept over it." 1. He wept for the sins they had committed, and the evil treatment which He Himself should receive at their hands. 2. He foresaw the calamities which were coming upon them, and desired not the woful day. 3. Spiritual judgments also awaited them, and this was matter of still greater lamentation. 4. The final consequence of all this also affected the compassionate Saviour; namely, their everlasting ruin in the world to come. II. Consider WHAT OUR LORD SAID AS WELL AS DID, when He came near and beheld the city—"If thou hadst known," &c. Here observe—1. The whole of religion is expressed by knowledge. Not speculative, but such as sanctifies the heart and influences the conduct—the holy wisdom that cometh from above. 2. That which it chiefly concerns us to know is, "the things which belong to our peace." 3. There is a limit to which this knowledge is confined. "This thy day." 4. When this time is elapsed, our case will be for ever hopeless: Now the things which belong unto thy peace "are hid from thine eyes!" Improvement. (1) Did Christ weep for sinners; and shall they not weep for themselves? Does not God call us to weeping; and does not our case call for it? (2) Let us beware of rejecting the gospel, and trifling with our privileges, lest we be given up to final impenitence. Insensibility is the forerunner of destruction. (3) Let those who are truly acquainted with the things which belong to their peace be thankful, and adore the grace which has made them to differ. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*) *Christ weeping over Jerusalem*.—I. I observe, in the first place, that THERE ARE CERTAIN THINGS, THE KNOWLEDGE OF WHICH IS ESSENTIAL TO YOUR ETERNAL PEACE. 1. It deeply concerns you to know, for example, in what situation you stand, with respect to God and the world to come. 2. Again, it deeply concerns us to know, whether God, by any means, may be reconciled, to those who have set themselves in opposition to His will. 3. Once more, it deeply concerns you to know, what state of mind is required in you, in order that you may profit by the grace and mercy of your dying Saviour. II. I observe, secondly, that THE SON OF GOD IS MOST AFFECTIONATELY DESIROUS THAT WE SHOULD KNOW THESE THINGS. III. NEVERTHELESS, THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST WILL NOT STOP THE COURSE OF HIS JUSTICE, IF THESE THINGS BE FINALLY DISREGARDED. 1. How inexcusable is the thoughtless sinner, who, after all, will not know the things which belong unto his peace! 2. But reflect, on the other hand, how welcome will every returning sinner be! (*J. Jowett, M.A.*) *The Saviour's tears over Jerusalem*.—The sight of Jerusalem, then, as Jesus was about to enter it, suggested the thought of national misery and degradation. He looked on the Temple, the place where the adorations and sacrifices of successive generations had been offered; it was now profaned. He looked on the city, the metropolis of Judæa, and the scene of high solemnities, and it was peopled by transgressors; was soon to be reduced by the might of a conquering power, its streets to be drenched with blood, and its buildings to be razed. Our Lord might chiefly allude to outward calamity, but can we doubt that the moral state of Jerusalem's inhabitants was what gave Him most concern? The doom spoken of descended as an act of vengeance, inflicted by God. But Jesus thought also of a still more pitiable wreck. He reflected on the consequences of unpardoned sin. It was not merely the overthrow of tower and palace, the destruction of what had been for so long a "house of prayer"; this called not forth an expression of such deep concern. It was principally an idea of the spiritual ruin coming upon such as had transgressed against so much light and warning, and who had resisted such earnest and oft-repeated pleadings. I. In further speaking from these verses, we may consider, first of all, the words to imply, that the people of Jerusalem HAD ENJOYED A

"DAY"—OF GRACE, NOW DRAWING TO A CLOSE—a time which had not been followed by suitable and adequate improvement. II. Let us consider our Lord's manifestation of feeling and His words on this occasion, as showing THE IMPORTANCE OF IN TIME ATTENDING TO THE THINGS THAT "BELONG TO OUR PEACE." III. It would appear that THERE IS A SET TIME ALLOWED FOR DOING THIS. Though it were true that the spirit of God ceases not to strive with man; though there were not danger of the sinner being wholly given up to his idols, yet to defer so great a work is hazardous and foolish. Is that the best time for turning to God when languor and decay are attacking the frame? IV. Our Saviour's declaration, when He bewailed Jerusalem's impenitence, is a PLEDGE OF HIS CONCERN FOR THE STATE OF SINNERS GENERALLY. Observe how long-suffering He was, saying still, "Turn ye at My reproof." They had slain His prophets; they were about to shed His blood; they had cast dishonour on the law and appointments of the Most High, provoking Him to anger; yet Jesus' sorrow showed the grief that filled His soul. These were the words of One who knew no guile, and to whom iniquity was abhorrent. Be encouraged therefore, O sinner, however many thine iniquities and pungent thy sense of guilt, to seek His favour. (*A. R. Bonar, D.D.*) *Jesus weeping over sinners*.—I. SIN IS NO TRIFLE. II. EVERY MAN HAS HIS DAY OF MERCIFUL VISITATION. But mercy has its limits. The day of grace will close. III. THE SINNER'S DOOM IS SEALED WHEN CHRIST GIVES HIM UP. The die cast salvation beyond reach. Hope gone. IV. IT IS A LOST SEASON OF MERCY AND OPPORTUNITY THAT WILL SO EMBITTER THE ETERNITY OF THE LOST. (*J. M. Sherwood, D.D.*) *Tears on beholding a multitude of men*.—There is always something heart-moving in the sight of a multitude of men. The Persian Xerxes shed tears as he watched the interminable ranks march past him on the way to Greece. The iron Napoleon once melted as he reviewed the vast army which followed him to his Russian campaign. And when the proudest, sternest, and most unfeeling hearts have shown emotion, what should we expect from the pitiful Son of God? Whenever He saw the multitude, and especially the city multitude, He was moved with compassion. That mass of life, heaving and throbbing like a troubled sea; that ceaseless tramp of eager feet and confused roar of innumerable voices; that measureless volume of mingled hope and despair; that infinitely varied array of faces, old and young, careless and anxious, joyous and miserable,—of laughing girls and broken-hearted widows, of jocund joys and haggard old men, with hungry looks; that incongruous procession of wealth and poverty, of want and superfluity, of rags and velvet, of vulgarity and refinement, of respectability and vice, of plump and well-fed life and vagrant homelessness, of purity and shame, of sweet religious hope and dismal despair, of titled splendour and nameless vagabondism, of feet winged with hope climbing to ambition's goal and of feet hurrying to the dark river to end the tragedy of bitter memories in one last cold plunge; that myriad-headed life, with all its selfish isolations, its fierce loneliness amid the jostling crowd, its every heart knowing its own bitterness or gloating over its own joy, unknown and unsympathized with by its neighbours; that awful race of passion and frenzied quest in which the runners forget that they are immortal souls with God's image stamped on every face. How was it possible for Him, to whom all souls were dear—all the children of the heavenly Father—how was it possible for Him to look upon that, or think of it, without emotion melting into tears? What man or woman of us can think of it without sharing in its pity and pathetic interest? (*J. Greenhough, M.A.*) *Christ's compassion for the Jewish people*.—I. INQUIRE WHAT THERE WAS IN THE STATE OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE, WHICH SO MOVED THE COMPASSION OF OUR LORD. The privileges of the Jewish people were above all lands. They were blessed with a divine theocracy; and to them belonged, amongst other most important privileges, the oracles of God. What could God have done which He had not done for them? The compassion of our Lord was moved, therefore—By their inflexible obstinacy. Theirs was the sin of men who hate the light, lest by it their deeds should be reproved! 2. Inveterate hostility. That greatness and power, when abused, should be hated, would not excite our surprise; but that goodness and mercy, when exercised, should be hated, might well excite our surprise, were it not abundantly proved in their history. 3. By their impending judgments. II. CONSIDER WHAT THE PRESENT STATE OF THAT PEOPLE CALLS FOR FROM OUR HANDS. (*W. Marsh, M.A.*) *The tears and lamentations of Jesus*.—I. First, we are to contemplate our Lord's INWARD GRIEF. 1. We note concerning it that it was so intense that it could not be restrained by the occasion. The occasion was one entirely by itself; a brief gleam of sunlight in a cloudy day, a glimpse of summer amid a cruel winter.

That must have been deep grief which ran counter to all the demands of the season, and violated, as it were, all the decorum of the occasion, turning a festival into a mourning, a triumph into a lament. 2. The greatness of His grief may be seen, again, by the fact that it overmastered other very natural feelings which might have been, and perhaps were, excited by the occasion. Our Lord stood on the brow of the hill where He could see Jerusalem before Him in all its beauty. What thoughts it awakened in Him! His memory was stronger and quicker than ours, for His mental powers were unimpaired by sin, and He could remember all the great and glorious things which had been spoken of Zion, the city of God. Yet, as He remembered them all, no joy came into His soul because of the victories of David or the pomp of Solomon; temple and tower had lost all charm for Him; "the joy of the earth" brought no joy to Him, but at the sight of the venerable city and its holy and beautiful house He wept. 3. This great sorrow of His reveals to us the nature of our Lord. How complex is the person of Christ! He foresaw that the city would be destroyed, and though He was divine He wept. While His nature on the one side of it sees the certainty of the doom, the same nature from another side laments the dread necessity. 4. In this our Lord reveals the very heart of God. Did He not say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father"? Here, then, you see the Father Himself, even he who said of old, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn," &c. 5. From a practical lesson, we may remark that this weeping of the Saviour should much encourage men to trust Him. Those who desire His salvation may approach Him without hesitation, for His tears prove His hearty desires for our good. 6. This, too, I think is an admonishment to Christian workers. Never let us speak of the doom of the wicked harshly, flippantly or without holy grief. 7. Let me add that I think the lament of Jesus should instruct all those who would now come to Him as to the manner of their approach. While I appealed to you just now were there any who said, "I would fain come to Jesus, but how shall I come"? The answer is,—come with sorrow and with prayer, even as it is written, "they shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them." As Jesus meets you so meet Him. III. We are now to consider our Lord's VERBAL LAMENTATIONS. These are recorded in the following words: "Oh that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." 1. First, notice, he laments over the fault by which they perished—"Oh that thou hadst known." Ignorance, wilful ignorance, was their ruin. 2. The Lord laments the bliss which they had lost, the peace which could not be theirs. "Oh that thou hadst known the things that belong unto thy peace." 3. But our Lord also lamented over the persons who had lost peace. Observe that He says,—"Oh that thou hadst known, even thou. Thou art Jerusalem, the favoured city. It is little that Egypt did not know, that Tyre and Sidon did not know, but that thou shouldst not know!" Ah, friends, if Jesus were here this morning, He might weep over some of you and say—"Oh that thou hadst known, even thou." 4. Our Lord wept because of the opportunity which they had neglected. He said, "At least in this thy day." It was such a favoured day: they aforetime had been warned by holy men, but now they had the Son of God Himself to preach to them. 5. The Lord Jesus mourned again because He saw the blindness which had stolen over them. They had shut their eyes so fast that now they could not see: their ears which they had stopped had become dull and heavy; their hearts which they had hardened had waxen gross; so that they could not see with their eyes, nor hear with their ears, nor feel in their hearts, nor be converted that He should heal them. Why, the truth was as plain as the sun in the heavens, and yet they could not see it; and so is the gospel at this hour to many of you, and yet you perceive it not. 6. Lastly, we know that the great flood-gates of Christ's grief were pulled up because of the ruin which He foresaw. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The tears of Jesus*:—Strangely mysterious are these tears! But they were as real as they are mysterious—solemnly and awfully real—the bitterest that ever descended from a grief-stricken countenance. They were the tears of a man, but the expression of Deity; and viewing them in the light of the ancient love and peculiar complacency with which Jerusalem and its inhabitants had been divinely regarded, we may designate them as the tears of disappointed affection. How briny and how many have been such tears, as they have fallen, hot and scalding, from the eyes of broken-hearted weepers! There are the tears of the father, welling up from the depths of parental love, in thinking of his prodigal boy. There are

the tears of the mother, wept over a lost daughter—tears that had been less bitter had the green turf received them instead of a memory of shame. Bitter, indeed, are such tears, but not so intensive of sorrow as “the tears of Jesus wept over lost souls.” I have read somewhere of a traveller who found a fragment of an arch among the ruins of Jerusalem; and by calculating on the principles of architectural construction, he proved that the arch, when complete, must have spanned the gulf that was near the city, and have rested on the other side. That ruined arch, to the eye of that traveller, indicated what it originally was, as contrasted with what it then was. Sin in the soul reveals the same thing. In man, apart from sin, we see what the soul was made to be. In sin we see what the soul is—a noble thing in ruins. It is solemnizing to walk amidst the vestiges of some sacred temple—to pick up here and there fragments of what were once objects of beauty and strength; to see in one place pieces of an antique window; in another, the segment of a colossal pillar; elsewhere, a remnant of tracery work, with bits of rich and curious mosaic. But what must have been the emotions of Jesus, as He stood there before the collapsed powers, and contemplated the desecrated sanctities of human temples!—souls once so fair in beauty, and so glorious in strength, that the Creator looked upon them, and “behold, they were very good!” Now so completely a wreck that as the Saviour looked, “He beheld and wept!” How fearful is the power belonging to man! Here we see the Son of God—One whose might and dominion over all material forces, satanic agencies, and physical ailments were absolute. No power stood in His way as a resisting medium save one; and this was a power of resistance that opened the floodgates of soul-sorrow, drew tears from His eyes, and broke forth in the convulsive exclamation: “O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!” In the light of these tears what awful responsibility is seen to clothe the human spirit! What power of will!—of a will that can resist the Divine will! “How often would I, but ye would not!” (G. H. Jackson.) *Tears a true mark of manhood*:—If it really was so, as has been gathered from Epiphanius, that some of the ancient Christians, or persons who bore the name, wished to expunge from the canon of Scripture what is said of the Saviour’s weeping on these two occasions, as if it had been unworthy of so glorious a Person to shed tears, it was very strange, and betrayed at once a sinful disrespect for the inspired Word of God, a leaning to the doctrines of Stoical pride and apathy, and an ignorance of what constitutes real excellence of human character. It is certainly a mark of imbecility to be given to weep for trifling reasons; but to weep occasionally, and when there is an adequate cause, instead of being a weakness, is perfectly compatible with true courage and manly sense, nay, is, in fact, a trait in the character of the majority of the most heroic and stout-hearted men of whom we read, either in sacred or profane history. As examples of this from Scripture may be mentioned, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, David, Jonathan, Hezekiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, Nehemiah, Peter, and Paul. Who more firm than the apostle of the Gentiles?—yet he thus writes to the Philippians, “Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction.” As for King David, that “mighty valiant man, and man of war,” the ancestor, and, in some respects, the type of Christ, it is worthy of notice that he wept at the very place where Jesus now wept; for it is thus written, in the account of his fleeing from Jerusalem, on the rebellion of Absalom, “David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered; and all the people that were with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.” Nor is it foreign to the defence of this act of weeping, as consonant with the character of the brave, to produce the authority of heathen writers. Homer, then, attributes tears to several of his heroes, Virgil to Æneas, and their respective historians to Alexander the Great, Julius Cæsar. Cato, Brutus, Marcellus, and Scipio; and one of the Latin poets says, “Nature shows that she gives very tender hearts to mankind, by giving them tears. This is the best part of our disposition or feeling.” Beyond a doubt, the tenderness which our Lord now displayed harmonized with, and set off by contrast, the wonderful resolution which animated Him, when “He turned not back,” but “set His face like a flint” to what was now before Him. (Jas. Foote, M.A.) *The tears of love*:—I heard the other day of a bad boy whom his father had often rebuked and chastened, but the lad grew worse. One day he had been stealing, and his father felt deeply humiliated. He talked to the boy, but his warning made no impression; and when he saw his child so callous the good man sat down in his chair and burst out crying, as if his heart would break. The boy stood very indifferent for a time,

but at last as he saw the tears falling on the floor, and heard his father sobbing, he cried, "Father, don't; father, don't do that: what do you cry for, father?" "Ah! my boy," he said, "I cannot help thinking what will become of you, growing up as you are. You will be a lost man, and the thought of it breaks my heart." "Oh, father!" he said, "pray don't cry. I will be better. Only don't cry, and I will not vex you again." Under God that was the means of breaking down the boy's love of evil, and I hope it led to his salvation. Just that is Christ to you. He cannot bear to see you die, and He weeps over you, saying, "How often would I have blessed you, and you would not!" Oh, by the tears of Jesus, wept over you in effect when He wept over Jerusalem, turn to Him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) If thou hadst known, even thou.—*Christ's lament over Jerusalem*:—Let us observe, briefly, that in our Lord's lament over the doomed city there is to be traced a threefold vein of feeling. 1. The tears and words of Jesus Christ are the tears and words of a true patriot, for Jerusalem was the heart and head of the nation. It was, politically speaking, more what Paris is to France than what London is to England, and although Christ's ministry had been largely spent in Galilee, we know from St. John's Gospel that at the great festivals He had laboured often and continuously in the sacred city. It may be thought that there was no place for patriotism in the heart of Jesus Christ—that coming as He did from heaven with a mission to the whole race of men, and with a work to do for each and for all, He could not thus cherish a mere localized and bounded enthusiasm—that, as all had interest in Him, His interest must reciprocally be for all and world-embracing—that as in Him, according to His apostle, "there is neither Greek nor Jew, barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free," but all are one, so He must have been Himself incapable of that restricted and particular concentration of thought and feeling and action upon the concerns of a single race or district which we practically understand by patriotism. My brethren, there is an element of truth in this. Jesus Christ, although a Jew by birth, belonged by His freedom from local peculiarities to the whole human family. He was, in a higher, more comprehensive, more representative sense than any before Him, human. All that was best, all that was richest in humanity, had its place in Him, and this is, at any rate, one import of the title by which He was commonly wont to speak of Himself as the Son of Man. But His relation to the whole race did not destroy His relation to His country any more than it destroyed His relation to His family—to His mother, to His foster-father, to those first cousins of His who, after the Hebrew manner, are called His brethren. Certainly He subordinated family ties as well as national ties to the claims of the kingdom of God—to His Father's business as He called it when only twelve years old. But because He kept these lower sympathies, claims, obligations, in their proper place, He did not ignore—He did not disavow them. To Him, as the Son of Mary, His family was dear; to Him, as the Son of David, the history of His country was dear. He would have parted with something of His true and deep humanity had it been otherwise; and therefore when He gazed on the city of His ancestors (for such it was) and saw in vision the Roman conqueror already approaching, and casting up earthworks on that very hill on which He was standing, and then by and by entering the sacred city with fire and sword, nor resting from His work till he had ploughed up the very foundations, till not one stone had been left upon another, His Jewish heart felt a pang of anguish which became tears and words. "If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." 2. But the lamentation of Christ over Jerusalem had a higher than any political or social meaning. The polity of Israel was not merely a state: it was a church as well. It was the kingdom of God among men. It is this which explains the passionate emotion towards Jerusalem which abounds in the Psalter—the joy in her glory, in her beauty, in her world-wide fame—the enthusiasm which can "walk about Zion and go round about her and tell the towers thereof"—the anger deep and strong which cannot forget that in the day of Jerusalem it was Edom which joined in the cry for her destruction—the woe which cannot, which will not, be comforted when she lies before the heathen in her ruin and her desolation. It was as a theocratic kingdom—as we should say, a Church—that Jerusalem and the whole Jewish polity was so dear to the religious Jew; and this aspect of the sacred city underlies those words which Jesus spoke on the road from Bethany. Once more. Jerusalem was not merely a country or a church: it was a hive of men and women: it was a home of souls. Among these, to each of these, the Divine Christ had preached, but had preached in vain. It was not the threatened architecture

of the Herodian temple which drew tears from those Divine eyes. It was not chiefly the tragic ending of a history rich in its interest and its incident. It was the condition, the destiny, the eternal destiny of the individual men and women of that very generation to which Christ had ministered? What of them? They had heard Him; and what were they after hearing Him? Ah! it was over those souls for which He was presently to shed His blood that Jesus wept His tears. It was souls that for Him made up Jerusalem. And it is in this last sense that our Lord's words come most closely home to us. Our influence upon our country, upon our portion of the Church, is necessarily very, fractionally small. We are each one as a private soldier in a great army, who has only to obey orders that are given by others; but in our individual capacities it is otherwise. Here as single souls we decide as well as act. Here we are free to make the most of opportunities: we are responsible for doing so. And opportunities come to us as we walk along the path of life, as Christ came to the Jews eighteen centuries ago. They come to us: we see them coming. We know that they are at hand—that they are close upon us. We know—we might know—that they will not be within our reach always—perhaps not to-morrow. It is the time, the solemn time, of our visitation. It is some friend who has brought before us for the first time the true meaning, the true solemnity, the blessedness of life. It is some change of circumstances, some great soul-subduing sorrow which has forced upon us a sense of the transitory nature of all things here below. It is some one truth or series of truths about our Divine Lord, His person, or His work, unknown, or known and rejected before, which has been borne in upon us with a strength and clearness of conviction which we cannot, if we would, possibly mistake, and which involves obedience, action, sacrifice, as its necessary correlatives. It is an atmosphere of new aspirations, of higher thoughts, of longings to be other and better than we are, that has, we know not how, taken possession of us. It is the presence and the breathing, could we only know it, of a heavenly Friend who haunts our spirits that, if we will, He may sanctify them. Christ—in one word—has been abroad by His Spirit in the streets and secret passages of the soul, as of old He was abroad in the by-ways and the temple-courts of Jerusalem; and the question is, Have we welcomed Him?—Have we held Him by the feet, and refused to let Him go except He bless us? We are worse off though we may not trace the deterioration. We have suffered if not without yet assuredly within. We have been tried, and failed; and failure means weakness entailed upon, incorporated into, the system of the soul. (*Canon Liddon.*)

Tenth Sunday after Trinity.—We have here, not only weeping but tearful lamentation, weeping accompanied with voice and words; and the weeper is the God-man, Christ Jesus. Eternal Deity is not an unfeeling Almightiness. He has a heart, and that heart can be touched, and grieved, and moved with compassion, and stirred with emotions. I. GOD INTENDS GREAT THINGS FOR THOSE TO WHOM HE HAS GIVEN HIS WORD AND ORDINANCES. He had chosen Jerusalem, and set up His temple there, and made it the centre of His most particular dealings with the elect nation, that it might reflect His glory, show forth His praises, and be the crown and rejoicing of the whole earth. The thing meant to be reached and made the everlasting possession of its people, is here summed up by the Saviour in the word "peace"; not mere rest from disturbance and strife; nor yet only health and well-being, as the word often denotes in the Old Testament; but that which is the subject of Divine promise, the highest results of God's mercy and favour, the true Messianic blessing of everlasting freedom from the distresses and consequences of sin, and exaltation to near and holy relationship with God and heaven. And great things are meant for us, even the same things of "peace" which pertained at first to the ancient Jerusalem. II. THERE IS A DAY OR SEASON WHEREIN TO KNOW AND ATTEND TO THE THINGS THAT RESPECT THIS "PEACE." And unto us have their forfeited privileges now descended. This is our day, beaming with all the light and blessings which once belonged to the Jews, only marked by an easier ritual and a better economy (Heb. xii. 18-24). III. THE DAY OF GRACE HAS ITS BOUNDARIES, OVER WHICH GOD'S SAVING MERCIES DO NOT FOLLOW THOSE WHO MISIMPROVE THEM. There was a Jewish age which ended in judgment, and the cutting off of those who failed to improve it; and so this present age must also end. The day of grace is limited, on the one side, by the lateness of the period in life at which the gospel comes to a man, and, on the other, by the failure of the faculties necessary to handle and use it. It is also quite possible for one's day of grace to terminate while yet both reason and life continue. There may be a loss of the external means and opportunities of salvation, or such a

separation from them, as for ever to prevent our reaching it. And where there has been long and persistent resistance of grace, habitual suppression of religious convictions and feelings, wilful refusal to fulfil known duty, and persevering withstanding of the influences and impulses of the Spirit of God, there is not only a possibility, but great danger of bringing on a state of callous indifference, and incapacitation which puts the offender beyond the reach of salvation. IV. THE TERMINATION OF THE DAY OF GRACE, WITHOUT HAVING SECURED THE BLESSING FOR WHICH IT WAS INTENDED, IS AN AWFUL CALAMITY. In the case of Jerusalem it brought tears and lamentations from the Son of God. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*) *The solicitude of Christ for incorrigible sinners*.—I. SPECIFY SOME OF THE MORE OBVIOUS CHARACTERISTICS OF INCORRIGIBLE MEN. There are several classes of people who, to say the least, are greatly exposed to unyielding impenitence, and who give fearful indication of final ruin. 1. This may be affirmed of men of a sceptical turn of mind. Such men are very apt never to become pious. 2. Another class of persons who are rarely made the subjects of grace are those of notoriously loose and vicious habits. 3. It may also be remarked, that men who are in the habit of making light of sacred things, and trifling with God, seldom become men of piety. If they can scoff at religion, if they can deride its conscientious disciples, there is little reason to believe they will ever become its disciples themselves. 4. In the same melancholy multitude are likewise found all those who are ardently and eagerly attached to the world. 5. There is another class of men who exhibit fearful symptoms of deep degeneracy, and they are those whose chosen companions are the guilty enemies of God and all righteousness. Men cannot habitually associate with those who are destitute of all moral principle, and have no fear of God before their eyes, without partaking of their character. 6. Those persons also give strong indications of being incorrigible, who have become hardened under religious privileges. 7. Still more hopeless are those who have outlived conviction, and resisted the Holy Spirit. 8. There is one class of persons more whose condition is as hopeless as that of any we have mentioned; I mean, the hypocrite and self-deceiver. II. We proceed, in the second place, to inquire, WHAT THERE IS IN THE CONDITION OF SUCH PERSONS TO EXCITE THE SYMPATHY AND SOLICITUDE OF CHRIST. 1. Their determined rejection of offered mercy. This is like a dagger to Christ's heart. 2. Their perversion of the means of grace. 3. Their utterly depraved character. And now, in conclusion, I cannot forbear remarking, in the first place, how unlike the Spirit of Christ is the apathy of the people of God in view of the perishing condition of impenitent men. Secondly, our subject strongly enforces, the importance of a diligent and anxious improvement of the day and means of salvation. Once more, in view of our subject, we may not avoid the inquiry, Are there none in this assembly towards whom the Saviour is now exercising the same tender compassion, which He exercised over incorrigible Jerusalem? I only add, in the last place, if such are the compassions of Christ towards guilty sinners, what confidence may we have that He will save all that come to Him. (*G. Spring, D.D.*) *Christ weeping over Jerusalem*.—I. WHY DID HE WEEP? It has been supposed that the picture of that approaching ruin and desolation which was coming so rapidly upon the unconscious capital, at once appalled and overwhelmed Him. He sketches that picture in strong and rapid strokes Himself (vers. 43, 44). And that which added to it an element of profoundest gloom, was the unconsciousness of those whom such a doom was threatening. Scarce a soul in Jerusalem seems to have been greatly sensible either of the national decadence or of its own individual peril. Must it not have been this that made Him weep? I do not doubt that it was an element in that Divine and unmatched sorrow. But that sorrow loses its profoundest significance unless we see that it had another and deeper element still. What is it, that in the thought of a wise and good man costs him the deepest pang when he encounters the waywardness and wrong-doing of his own child? Is it merely that, as he looks forward, he sees the inevitable misery which that waywardness will entail? But you may be sure that such a parent is thinking of something else with a keener anguish still. He is thinking, "What must the nature be that is so insensible to love and duty and goodness!" He is thinking, "What are the moral sensibilities of one to whom baseness and ingratitude and wrong-doing are such easy and instinctive things!" He is thinking, "What have I to hope for from a child whose ruling impulse come out in deeds like these!" And even so, I think, it was with Christ. Nay, we are not left to our surmises. His own words tell us what made Him weep: "If thou . . . thine eyes." It was this spectacle of human insensibility, of eyes that would not see, and of ears that would not hear,

that broke the Saviour down. The love of goodness, the longing for righteousness, the aspiration for nobleness and spiritual emancipation—these were dead in them. And it was this that made Christ weep. II. And this brings me to that other question suggested by these tears of Christ. **WHAT DID THEY MOVE HIM TO DO?** Remember, that so far as the Jerusalem of that day was concerned, He Himself intimates the case to have been hopeless. And when that scornful indifference on their part was exchanged at last for a distinctive enmity, with that needless prodigality, as doubtless it seemed even to some of His own disciples, He flung away His life. Flung it away? Aye, but only how soon and how triumphantly to take it again! Such a history is pregnant with lessons for to-day. There are a good many of us, who from the elevation of a thoughtful observation, are looking down on the city in which we live. How fevered and faithless and morally insensible seem multitudes of those who live in it. How can such a one look down on all this and not weep? God forbid that such a spectacle should leave any one of us insensible or unmoved! But when that is said, let us not forget that with Christ weeping was but the prelude and forerunner of working. There were tears first, but then what heroic and untiring toil! I hear men say, no matter what good cause invites their co-operation, "It is of no use. Most men are bound to go to the devil; it is the part of wisdom to get out of the way and let them go as quickly as possible"; and I brand all such cries, no matter in what tones of complacent hopelessness they may utter themselves, as treason against God and slander against humanity. Faithlessness like this is a denial of God, and of goodness as well. And as such, it is an atheism with which no terms are to be made nor any truce to be kept. For, high above our blinded vision there sits One who, as He once wept over Jerusalem and then died for it, now lives for Jerusalem and for all His wayward children, and who bids us watch and strive with Him for those for whom once He shed His blood! And if He is still watching, even as once He wept over His creatures, God forbid that of any human soul you and I should quite despair! And therefore least of all our own souls. And so, while we weep, whether it be over the evil that is in others or in ourselves, our tears will be rainbows, bright with the promise of an immortal hope. Aye, far above the sorrows and the sins of the city that now is, we shall see the splendours of the New Jerusalem that is yet to be. (*Bishop H. C. Potter.*)

The sinner's day:—I. **THAT THE SINNER HAS HIS DAY OF MERCY AND HOPE.** 1. It is a period of light. Night is the season of darkness. 2. A period of activity. We must work now, or never. 3. An exceedingly limited period. "A day." But a step from cradle to tomb. 4. The present period is our day. II. **THIS DAY IS ACCOMPANIED WITH THINGS WHICH BELONG TO THE SINNER'S PEACE.** By peace here we understand the welfare, the salvation of the sinner. The peace of God is the pledge and earnest of every blessing. Now, in this day we have—1. The gracious provisions of peace. Christ has made peace by His cross, and before us is the cross lifted up. 2. The invitations and promises of peace belong to this day. 3. The means of obtaining peace belong to this day. III. **THAT IF THESE THINGS ARE NOT KNOWN NOW, IN THIS OUR DAY, THEY WILL BE FOR EVER HIDDEN FROM OUR EYES.** Now observe—1. The future state of the sinner is one of night. As such it is a period of darkness. 2. This state of night will be everlasting. **APPLICATION: We learn—**1. That the sinner's present state is one of probation and mercy. 2. That God sincerely desires the salvation of souls. 3. That all who lose their souls do so by their own impenitency. (*J. Burns, D.D.*)

Christ's lamentation over Jerusalem:—I. **THE EXHIBITION OF CHARACTER WHICH IT GIVES US.** Here we perceive—1. The Saviour's deep interest in the state of man. 2. The Saviour's compassion to the chief of sinners. II. **THE SENTIMENTS IT CONVEYS.** 1. That there are things belonging to a man's peace which it becomes him to know. 2. That there is a day in which a man might know these things. 3. That if this day be wasted these things will be hidden from him. (*Essex Remembrancer.*)

Three times in a nation's history:—These words, which rang the funeral knell of Jerusalem, tell out in our ears this day a solemn lesson; they tell us that in the history of nations, and also, it may be, in the personal history of individuals, there are three times—a time of grace, a time of blindness, and a time of judgment. This, then, is our subject—the three times in a nation's history. When the Redeemer spake, it was for Jerusalem the time of blindness; the time of grace was past; that of judgment was to come. I. **THE TIME OF GRACE.** We find it expressed here in three different modes: first, "in this thy day"; then, "the things which belong to thy peace"; and thirdly, "the time of thy visitation." And from this we understand the

meaning of a time of grace; it was Jerusalem's time of opportunity. The time in which the Redeemer appeared was that in which faith was almost worn out. He found men with their faces turned backward to the past, instead of forward to the future. They were as children clinging to the garments of a relation they have lost; life there was not, faith there was not—only the garments of a past belief. He found them groaning under the dominion of Rome; rising up against it, and thinking it their worst evil. The coldest hour of all the night is that which immediately precedes the dawn, and in that darkest hour of Jerusalem's night her Light beamed forth; her Wisest and Greatest came in the midst of her, almost unknown, born under the law, to emancipate those who were groaning under the law. His life, the day of His preaching, was Jerusalem's time of grace. During that time the Redeemer spake the things which belonged to her peace: but they rejected them and Him. Now, respecting this day of grace we have two remarks to make. First: In this advent of the Redeemer there was nothing outwardly remarkable to the men of that day. And just such as this is God's visitation to us. Generally, the day of God's visitation is not a day very remarkable outwardly. Bereavements, sorrows—no doubt in these God speaks; but there are other occasions far more quiet and unobtrusive, but which are yet plainly days of grace. A scruple which others do not see, a doubt coming into the mind respecting some views held sacred by the popular creed, a sense of heart loneliness and solitariness, a feeling of awful misgiving when the future lies open before us, the dread feeling of an eternal godlessness, for men who are living godless lives now—these silent moments unmarked, are the moments in which the Eternal is speaking to our souls. Once more: That day of Jerusalem's visitation—her day of grace—was short. A lesson here also for us. A few actions often decide the destiny of individuals, because they give a destination and form to habits; they settle the tone and form of the mind from which there will be in this life no alteration. We say not that God never pleads a long time, but we say this, that sometimes God speaks to a nation or to a man but once. If not heard then, His voice is heard no more. II. THE TIME OF BLINDNESS. If a man will not see, the law is he shall not see; if he will not do what is right when he knows the right, then right shall become to him wrong, and wrong shall seem to be right. III. THE TIME OF JUDGMENT. It came in the way of natural consequences. We make a great mistake respecting judgments. God's judgments are not arbitrary, but the results of natural laws. The historians tell us that Jerusalem owed her ruin to the fanaticism and obstinate blindness of her citizens; from all of which her Redeemer came to emancipate her. Had they understood, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," "Blessed are the meek," and "Blessed are the peacemakers"; had they understood that, Jerusalem's day of ruin might never have come. Is there no such thing as blindness among ourselves? May not this be our day of visitation? First, there is among us priestly blindness; the blindness of men who know not that the demands of this age are in advance of those that have gone before. Once more, we look at the blindness of men talking of intellectual enlightenment. It is true that we have more enlightened civilization and comfort. What then? Will that retard our day of judgment? Jerusalem was becoming more enlightened, and Rome was at its most civilized point, when the destroyer was at their gates. Therefore, let us know the day of our visitation. It is not the day of refinement, nor of political liberty, nor of advancing intellect. We must go again in the old, old way; we must return to simpler manners and to a purer life. We want more faith, more love. The life of Christ and the death of Christ must be made the law of our life. (F. W. Robertson, M.A.) *The things belonging to our peace*:—I. THERE ARE THINGS WHICH BELONG TO OUR PEACE. Peace has a large signification; it implies not only the inward feeling of the mind, but generally our happiness and welfare. The things which belong to our peace are provided for us and pressed upon our acceptance in the Gospel of Christ. And this peace must be sought for personally by each one on his own behalf. But it concerns his everlasting peace that the sinner should undergo a change of heart. II. THERE IS A TIME IN WHICH WE MAY SECURE THOSE THINGS THAT MAKE FOR OUR PEACE. Now is that time, and now is the only time. Of to-morrow neither you nor I are secure. Now is the time in which you may seek the Lord, and in which He will be found. III. THERE IS A TIME WHEN THEY WILL BE FOR EVER HID FROM OUR EYES. There is such a thing as a hard and obdurate heart—there is such a state as final impenitence—there is such a calamitous condition as that of a lost soul. (H. J. Hastings, M.A.) *Christ's appeal to the heart*:—I. THY TRY DAY. The day of thy visitation, the

day when God's goodness and grace were especially near thee; the day of dawning hopes and bright promises; the day which, if it had been welcomed and used aright, might have coloured, ennobled, and redeemed all the rest. It was the day when, as youths, we left our father's house to take our place in the busy world, when thoughts of duty and honour, of true work and faithful service, were fresh and strong in our breasts, when we were resolved, God helping us, there should be no idle hours, no corrupting habits, no dread secrets which could not be breathed or even thought of in the sanctity of the home, or in the presence of our sister or our mother. Or, it was the day when some heavenly vision of the beauty of goodness, of the sacredness of service, of the helpfulness of prayer, of the nearness of God to your innermost soul, filled your heart with its glow and peace, and you longed and vowed ever to cherish the kindly light, ever to obey the heavenly voice, ever to walk with God, and repose in Him. Or, it was the day when, after some sad fall, or after many reckless, wasted years, you came to yourself, you saw from the very edge the precipice to which you had come, you felt keenly and bitterly the misery of the shame into which you had sunk, and, for the first time, Christ's vision of the face and heart of God, of the Father seeking the poor prodigal, brought penitence and hope; when thoughts of Christ, with His words of forgiveness and help and peace, seemed welcome and consoling to you, as rest at last to the sleepless brain, or kindly, gentle care to the fever-stricken patient.

II. IF THOU HADST KNOWN AT LEAST IN THIS THY DAY. 'Tis one of the sorrows of life that we spend a lifetime in gaining the needful experience. "Human experience," says Coleridge, "like the stern-lights of a ship at sea, too often only illuminates the faith we have passed over." The youth does not know the value of the school till after he has left it, or the comfort and charm of the home till it is broken up and he is alone in the world; the man does not know the value of time, or health, or money, or character, till harsh misfortune or his own fault have deprived him of them; we do not fully realize how much we needed the companionship, example, and sympathy of friends till death has snatched them from us. And so with spiritual blessings and opportunities.

III. THE THINGS THAT BELONG UNTO THY PEACE. The life of Christ in the heart. The service of our heavenly Father here and now. (J. T. Stannard.)

Our day of grace:—As God dealt with the city of Jerusalem, so He deals with us as individuals. God has given us a day of grace—has given a time wherein to repent of sin and prepare for another world. This day and this period is circumscribed. It is, as it were, a circle described around us; and when we pass over that boundary, then the day of grace is past and gone; the spirit has ceased to strive, and our doom is fixed for ever. I will illustrate this from history. One of the kings of Syria made war upon Egypt, which was at that time an ally of the Roman republic. When the news reached the Roman senate, they despatched into Egypt two senators, one of whom was a dear friend of the king. They went direct to the camp of the Syrian monarch, who came forth to meet them; but the senator, refusing to recognize him as his friend, at once put him upon his choice—to raise the siege and withdraw his army out of Egypt, or to forfeit his friendly relation with Rome, who would at once send forth her legions and compel him. To this he endeavoured to give an equivocal answer: he would consider over it, or he would consider of it at another time. But this was not enough for the Romans; the senator, therefore, with the wand he had in his hand, drew a circle around him on the sand where they stood, and demanded his answer and decision ere he left it. He had to make his choice: he decided to withdraw his army, and then the senator extended his hand and recognized his friend. In a similar way God has drawn a circle around us, and demands us to make a choice. That circle is our day of grace. May we, then, to-day, while it is called to-day, harden not our hearts, lest God should swear in His wrath we shall not enter into His rest! (A Jones.)

"In this thy day":—Thy day! If when the sun sets in the west we were not sure whether he would rise on the morrow, oh what an evening it would be! ONE DAY! "Thy day!" How precious! But if the day is allowed to pass, and the work of the day not done, how terrible the sunset! Jerusalem had her day; the day was passing—it was past. Jerusalem did not know her day, and did not notice that it had passed. Jerusalem, with her day done, was laughing: Jesus, looking on lost Jerusalem, wept. This is not of private interpretation—it is written for our sakes. Our city has a day; ourselves have a day. Throughout this day it is peace—your peace—pressing like the air around us. The night cometh, when that light of life is gone. Men mistake the meaning of Emmanuel's tenderness. It is not tenderness to sin. Men are tender to their own sin, treating it as a spoiled

child—blaming it in words, but fondling it all the while; and they think that Christ will turn out such an one as themselves. His grief does not indicate a holding back, a hesitating to cast away the wicked. The earnestness with which the Redeemer strove to snatch the brand from the burning, shows that there is a burning for the brand. The tears He shed over Jerusalem do not prove that He will falter and hesitate to lay her even with the ground when her day is done: if He had thought that Jerusalem might escape in her sin, He would not have wept to see her sinning. No preachers are so terrible as the Redeemer's tears. (*W. Arnot.*) *Too late*:—God forbid that any of you should at the last have the dismay of the Scotchwoman of whom I was reading. One night she could not sleep because of her soul's wandering from Christ. She got up and wrote in her diary: "One year from now I will attend to the matters of my soul." She retired, but could not sleep. So she arose again, and wrote a better promise in her diary: "One month from now I will attend to the matters of my soul." She retired again, but found no sleep, and arose again and wrote: "Next week I will attend to the matters of my soul." Then she slept soundly. The next day she went into scenes of gaiety. The following day she was sick, and the middle of next week she died. Delirium lifted from her mind just long enough for her to say: "I am a week too late. I am lost!" Oh, to be a year too late, or a month too late, or a week too late, or a day too late, or a minute too late, or a second too late, is to be for ever too late. May God Almighty, by His grace, keep us from the wild, awful, crushing catastrophe of a ruined soul. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *The time of the visitation*.—*Knowing the time of our visitation*:—I. THE TIME OF OUR VISITATION. 1. The country which has given us birth. We are highly favoured in this respect. We enjoy religious freedom. 2. The dispensation under which we live. Full blaze of gospel sun. 3. The revelation which God has been pleased to give us of His will. 4. The ministry, by which the written Word is explained to the understanding and enforced on the conscience. II. THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH TIMES OF VISITATION ARE GRANTED. They are granted for purposes of the highest consequence to every one of you. 1. First of all, to be instrumental in accomplishing the conversion of your hearts and lives to God. 2. This entire conversion of your hearts and lives to God, is the foundation of all Christian experience and all Christian practice. 3. And then, as to its final and ultimate object, this "time of visitation" looks forward to your everlasting salvation; for the work of religion is not only to be begun, and it is not only to be proceeded with, but it is likewise to be perfected. III. OUR NEGLECT OF THESE OPPORTUNITIES. How is it that, notwithstanding we are all favoured with the means of salvation, and with many loud calls to secure the purposes for which they are given to us—how is it that so many amongst even you are as yet unsaved, and "know not the time of your visitation"? 1. I suppose that, in reference to some, it is in consequence of your perseverance in the practice of sin. 2. There are others who know not and do not improve "the time of their visitation," by reason of their thoughtlessness and inattention to Divine things. 3. There is another reason to be assigned for your not knowing "the time of your visitation"—and that is, indecision and delay. "He that is not with Me," said Christ, "is against Me." 4. Then, let me say, further, that all those know not "the time of their visitation," who, for any reason whatever, do not come to the Lord Jesus Christ to believe with their hearts unto righteousness. 5. Perhaps I ought to say, there are some who know not "the time of their visitation," by reason of their inconstancy and negligence. IV. In the last place, we ought to look a little at THE JUDGMENT WHICH, SOONER OR LATER, IS SURE TO OVERTAKE ALL THOSE WHO PERSIST IN DISREGARDING THEIR MEANS AND OPPORTUNITIES. (*J. Bicknell.*) *Divine visitations*:—The system of the natural world—with all its laws, facts, processes, and events; the system of social life, including the family and civil society; the system of business life, including all proper industries and right occupations, all rightful forms of development, all cares and labours—all these are included in the system of visitations which God employs in His daily education of men, and their treatment and control. In other words, God employs all the apparatus of the natural world, in its results both upon the body and the mind; all the social influences that surround and educate men; all the organizations by which man is drawn out in various industries, and becomes an operative and a creator; all the various events that transpire outside of the mind or its volition, which come up in what we call providences of God; and above all these, the direct gospel system, supervised by God's personal Spirit. Through all these various influences, God acts upon the human soul; and all these are but

parts of God's one system, for the development, the education, and the elevation of men. The time of God's visitations has included every period of our lives. They have not been special to youth, to middle life, or to old age. Not only has the Divine economy had respect to the faculties of the soul, but to man as a creature. For example, there are times—and the element of time has entered largely into the system of Divine culture—when they have met us in childhood, with influences appropriate to that period, acting through the easier affections and susceptibilities of early life. I do not believe that there is a man in this house, who, if he were to speak his experience, would not say, "I was subject in my boyhood to times of religious depression." They say "depression," though they should rather say religious inspiration and elevation. These were awakenings by which they were lifted up from the dull and the obscure of life, and made to feel something of the invisible, and of the power of the world to come. And as childhood goes into boyhood or early manhood, the Divine strivings do not cease. They may change their form; they may cease to act through the same susceptibilities; they may take hold through the developments of the understanding, the speculations of a man's reason, or a different and larger reach of the imagination; but, nevertheless, they take hold still in early manhood and middle life. God's visitations of mercy not only include every one of the faculties of the human soul, and all the periods of time in which a man lives, but are made to act upon men through every gradation and variation of their condition and history. In other words, we are tried in every possible development of our physical state. We are tried by our disappointments; we are tried by our successes! God heaps mercies upon men, and then takes them all away! He blesses, enriches, and establishes men, and then shuts them up, impoverishes, and subverts them! It is remarkable, in respect to these visitations of God, that they do not follow the telescope; they are rather like comets, that come when they please; for when you search for God, "by searching you cannot find Him out." Such thoughts have come to you unbidden, sometimes in your counting-room, or when you were on a journey, or on the sea; sometimes when you have been in your house all alone, your family in the country; sometimes in trouble and adversity; in various ways—often coming, though never twice alike, as if the Divine phases had sought to present, at different times, different aspects to you. And if, all the way along, you had treasured up these times—precious times of great treasure!—if you had treasured them as you have when you have made a good bargain, or gained a new honour; if you had treasured all these interior peculiarities as you have the exterior—you would find them, I think, almost within speaking distance all the way from childhood to manhood; and although you had never such a consecutive view of the whole, yet really all along you have been subject to such impressions! Under such visitations there is brought very near to men such a thought of the other life, of God's eternal kingdom and their immortality in it, as may produce very serious practical fruits in them. In view of these facts and illustrations of facts, I remark in closing, first, upon the immensity of the influences which men receive for good—the disproportion in this world between the educating influences for good, and those which sometimes we suspect are for evil. For we are apt to think that this great world is all against goodness, and that men are surrounded by such inducements to evil, such temptations of their passions, that there is an impression that man is so neglected and so set upon at disadvantage, that there is scarcely the evidence of his ever being an object of mercy. Contrariwise, it is a truth that man stands in the midst of a world which is one peculiar and complex educating institution, and what is more, educating in the right direction. The gradual growing effect of the course that I have been speaking of, is worthy of a moment's attention—the habit of thus resisting the visitation of God's Spirit upon us. What is the result of having a visitation, and of neglecting it? The general apprehension is, that it offends God, and that man is destroyed vindictively, or penalty; but we must look at it more narrowly than that. In the first place, then, I think that it is in respect to our moral susceptibilities as it is in regard to all our senses; they become blunted by repeated perversion. A man can treat his eye in such a way that he shall become blind. He can blunt his hearing so that he shall become deaf. He can injure his tongue so as to have no appreciation of flavours. He can conduct himself so that his whole body may be broken down and destroyed before he is fifty years old. So in respect to a man's moral nature. A man's moral susceptibilities may be so dull, that by the time he is fifty years old, these approaches no longer affect him in this world. And the effect is, the gradual diminution of moral susceptibility; so that the conjunc-

tions of circumstances, by which the man shall appear to himself to be surrounded, are less and less frequent, because their effect is less and less apparent. What is the state of such a man? What a terrible condition it is for a man to stand in! Ah! when the day of visitation is passed, what has happened?—not alone in those extreme cases, of men who are hardened past all shame and feeling; but what has happened in other cases, where men are not so incorrigible, and not so hard? Is God so angry at them that He ceases to offer them any more mercy? Does He pass them altogether by? Not at all! Oh, the goodness of God! There is just as much summer in the deserts of Arabia as in our American prairies! The sun and the showers of summer are in both places: but it is a desert in one, and it is a growing, luxuriant prairie in the other. There is just as much summer for a sepulchre as there is for a mansion; but the summer sun brings joy and cheer to those in the populous house, where the father and the mother are happy, and all the children are full of glee and joy; while, as it shines upon the sepulchre's roof, everything is solitary, sad, and still, because there are dead men's bones within, which the sunlight can never waken! It is just the same in the moral government of God. There is the same provision of light, of air, of warmth, of raiment, in immense abundance; but all these are conjoined with this one invariable, universal necessity—our own appropriation of them. There is unlimited store of good, yet men will starve if they do not appropriate it to themselves. There is an ocean of air, yet men will suffocate if they refuse to breathe. He is resolute for evil. He has been surrounded by Divine influences, but he has continually resisted them, until he has been hardened by the process—until moral susceptibility has died out of him—until he has disorganized his nature—until he has destroyed himself! And when he passes through the brief period of his life—through its rapid rolling months and years—and rises into the presence of God, he stands in condemnation! Then he will not be able to say one word! The long procession of God's teachings, which were given to draw him away from his immorality; all the Divine influences that have been visited upon him; all these things will then stand out unmistakably and indisputably; and the man will have nothing to say, except this—"I destroyed myself!" (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Times of visitation:—1. And first, I would ask you to go back to the period of your youth. Was not that a "time of visitation?" Do you not remember its freshness, its freedom, its joy? 2. Again: I may speak of those special Divine influences which are often realized in connection with the services of the sanctuary, and the preaching of God's Word, as constituting "a time of visitation." 3. Yet again: there are "times of visitation," in which the individual is more directly concerned, as separate from all around him. It may be in the church, or it may be at home in the quiet chamber, or it may be in neither, but out under the great dome of heaven, and among the scenes of nature. 4. Once more: there are providential events which may be regarded in the light of a "time of visitation" to those concerned in them. (*C. M. Merry.*)

The time of visitation:—I. WHAT IS A DIVINE VISITATION? 1. The common use of the word associates it with judgment, with judicial infliction of punishment of some sort. 2. Divine visitations are often connected with the purpose of blessing. 3. God visits us, in giving us the fruits of the earth in due season. 4. Visitation means warning. It is in this sense our Lord here describes His own ministry as the "visitation" of Jerusalem. Partly, no doubt, it was a visitation of judgment, yet more was it a visitation of blessing; it brought with it instruction, grace, pardon. His visitation was also a warning against some besetting sins of a very old and settled religion—against formalism, hypocrisy, insincere use of sacred language, insincere performance of sacred duties; and it was especially a warning to the people of Israel, against their taking a wrong turn in their thoughts and aspirations and efforts in the future before them. II. WHY SHOULD THE FAILURE TO KNOW THE TIME OF VISITATION VERY OFTEN BE FOLLOWED BY SUCH GREAT CONSEQUENCES? 1. Because such failure implies the decline of spiritual interest, which in those who have had any religious training and opportunities is culpable. To believe sincerely in the living God, who interests Himself in His mortal creatures, is to be on the look-out for tokens of His intervention in the affairs of men; in other words, for His visitations. When a Divine visitation comes, it is a touchstone of the interests of souls: it finds some anxious, expectant, willing to recognize and make the most of it, and others, as our Lord said, whose hearts have waxed gross, and whose ears are dull of hearing, and whose eyes are closed. This insensibility to the approach of God in His life and power wounds the heart of God. We cannot forsake Him for anything else with impunity.

2. If God visits in warning, then to neglect His visitation is to neglect conditions of safety against dangers which are before us. So it was now with the Jews. If the Jews had given heed to the teaching of our Saviour the conflict with the Roman authority would never have taken place. III. THE DIFFICULTY FOR MANY MEN IS TO RECOGNIZE AT THE CRITICAL MOMENT THE FACT THAT GOD IS VISITING THEM. The most vitally important days and weeks in the history of a soul may have little to distinguish them outwardly from other days. It needs the earnest, penetrating recognition of God's unceasing and loving interest in His creatures to read life aright, whether it be corporate or individual life, to see the moral and spiritual worth of events. It may be said that there is room for a great deal of illusion in this matter of Divine visitation. "We may easily think ourselves more important people than we are; we may imagine that the events of our little lives have a meaning and worth which does not belong to them. Is there any test or criterion of His visitation?" Well, we have first of all to remember that no human life at any moment is other than an object of the deepest interest to God. He who made, He who redeemed, He who sanctified us, does not think any life too insignificant to be visited by Him. The hairs of your head are all numbered; it is impossible that the Infinite Love should ever despise the work of His own hands, the purchase of His own cross. The only question is, whether we are warranted in thinking that His interest and oversight have at a given time reached a special climax or visitation, having exceptional claims on our attention; and we are justified in thinking that this is the case if the truth which such a visitation enforces is in correspondence with the higher truth which we have learned before, though, perhaps, going beyond it, and if the conduct to which we are impelled or encouraged involves self-denial, involves that which is unwelcome or exacting. (*Canon Liddon.*) *Divine visitations*.—1. God visits a nation, when at a critical moment in its history He bids it maintain some imperilled principle, or do some great act of justice. Perhaps the opportunity has been neglected; it passes, and then the sentence of national decline is written on the pale of history, with the added reason: "Because thou knowest not," &c. 2. God visits at His own time the several branches of His Church, it may be after long years of apathy and darkness. He visits a church when He raises up in her teachers who insist upon forgotten aspects of truth, who call men from false standards of life; or when He opens great ways of extending His people and of influencing numbers of human beings to seek the things that belong to their peace. If this invitation to better things is set aside, nominally as if it were the revival of some old superstition, but rather really because it makes an unwelcome demand on the conscience and the will, then the day of visitation passes, and the doom of the church which comes in time is justified in the conscience of its own children: "Because," &c. 3. Souls are the units of which nations and churches are composed, and God visits a soul when He brings before it a new range of opportunities. One of yourselves, we will say, has been for years recognizing just so much of religious truth as the people about him, and no more; acting just so far upon the duties which it suggests, and no further; your thought and practice are, as we say, conventional—that is to say, they are determined by the average feeling of those among whom you are thrown in life, and not by any personal sense or grasp of religious principle, of what religious principle is, of what is due to it, of what is due to the Infinite and Everlasting God. And then something occurs which appeals to the soul as nothing has appealed to it before, which puts life, destiny and duty, truth, Holy Scripture, the Cross of Christ, the Person of Christ, the garments of Christ, the Church of Christ, before it in quite a new light. It may be a sentence in a letter: it may be a sudden thought which takes possession of you at the time of prayer; it may be a friend who insists on duties which have hitherto been mere phrases to you; it may be that you suddenly find yourself obliged to decide between two courses—one involving sacrifice more or less painful, and the other the surrender of something which your conscience tells you is right and true, and the having to make a decision puts a strain on your moral being, which is of itself a visitation. Or, one who has been intimately associated with you for many years has died; his death has taught you the emptiness of this passing life, it has put you out of heart with the half-hearted religion of past years; in short, this trial, while it presses heavily on your heart, has gone far to make you quite other than what you were. And this is a visitation. God is speaking to your soul, and much depends on your understanding Him, on your resolving and acting and re-fashioning your life accordingly. Much, I say, depends on this; for be sure that it is very serious to have enjoyed

such a religious opportunity and to have neglected it. Divine visitation does not leave us where it found us; it always leaves us better or worse. To have been in contact with truth and grace, and to have put it from us, is to be weaker, poorer, worse off—religiously speaking—than we were. When the Divine visitation of the soul has been rejected, then the day of its enemies has arrived; then the legions of hell encamp all around it, the powers of darkness make sure of their victim. There is such a thing as the last chance in the life of a soul. God knows when it has passed by each of us, but one day certainly all of us do, in whatever way, pass it. (*Ibid.*) *The visitation of Jerusalem*:—1. This visitation of Jerusalem by its Monarch was unobtrusive. There was nothing of outward pageantry or of royalty to greet the Son of David; there was no royal livery, no currency bearing the king's image and superscription—all these things had passed into the hands of a foreign conqueror, or in parts of the country, into the hands of princes who had the symbol of independence without its reality. There was not even the amount of circumstance of state which attends the reception of a visitor to some modern institution—a visitor who only represents the majesty of some old prerogative or some earthly throne. As Israel's true King visits Jerusalem He always reminds us of a descendant of an ancient family returning in secret to the old home of his race; everything is for him instinct with precious memories; every stone is dear to him, while he himself is forgotten. He wanders about unnoticed, unobserved, or with only such notice as courtesy may accord to a presumed stranger. He is living amid thoughts which are altogether unshared by the men whom he meets as he moves silently and sadly among the records of the past, and he passes away from sight as he came, with his real station and character generally unrecognized, if, indeed, he is not dismissed as an upstart with contempt and insult. So it was with Jerusalem and its Divine Master. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. It may, indeed, be asked whether the unobtrusive character of His visit does not excuse the ignorance of Jerusalem. But, my brethren, there is ignorance and ignorance. There is the ignorance which we cannot help, which is part of our circumstances in this life, which is imposed on us by Providence, and such ignorance as this, so far as it extends, does efface responsibility. God will never hold a man accountable for knowledge which God knows to be out of his reach; but there is also ignorance, and a great deal of it, in many lives for which we are ourselves responsible, and which would not have embarrassed us now if we had made the best of our opportunities in past times, and just as a man who, being drunk, commits a street outrage is held to be responsible for the outrage which he commits without knowing what he is doing, because he is undoubtedly responsible for getting into this condition of brutal insensibility, so God holds us all to be accountable for an ignorance which He knows to be due to our own neglect. Now this was the case with the men of Jerusalem at that day. Had they studied their prophets earnestly and sincerely, had they refused to surrender themselves to political dreams which flattered their self-love and which coloured all their thoughts and hopes, they would have seen in Jesus of Nazareth the Divine Visitor whose coming Israel had for long ages been expecting. As it was, His approach was too unobtrusive for a generation which looked forward to a visible triumph. Thus they knew not the time of their visitation. And the visitation of Jerusalem was final; it was not to be repeated. God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers of the Jewish race by the prophets, in these last days spoke unto them by His Son. Those were His last words to His chosen people, the last probation, the last opportunity; we may reverently say that there was no more after that to be done. Each prophet had contributed something which others could not; each had filled a place in the long series of visitations which no other could fill. Already Jerusalem had been long since once destroyed after a great neglected opportunity. The Book of Jeremiah which we have lately been reading in the daily lessons, is one long and pathetic commentary on the blindness and obstinacy of kings, priests, prophets, and people who preceded the Chaldean invasion, and who rendered it inevitable. And still that ruin, vast, and for the time being, utter as it was, had been followed by a reconstruction, that long and bitter exile by a return. But history will not go on for ever repeating events which contradict probability. One greater visitation awaited Jerusalem, one more utter ruin, and each was to be the last. "Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." What is the explanation of that "because"? What is the connection as between cause and effect which it suggests? Does it mean merely that the Jews, having as a people

rejected Christ, were punished by the destruction of their city and temple, but that nothing further can be said about it? That the punishment was independent of the crime, although not excessive, and that it might just as easily as not have been something else than what it was, since the punishment was inflicted from without by the Roman army, which, consisting as it did of brave and disciplined pagans, could have no ideas about the spiritual history or responsibilities of a distant Asiatic race? No, brethren; this is not the full or the true account of the case. Here, as elsewhere, God works by laws which we may trace and which are not generally superseded by agencies of a different character. Jerusalem's ignorance of its visitation by the King Messiah, had a great deal to do as cause with effect with Jerusalem's ruin. What was the main cause of that ruin? It was, as has been said, that the Jews were under the influence of a false and blind prejudice and ambition. They had made up their minds that their Messiah was to be a political rather than a spiritual king; He was to make Jerusalem the centre of an empire which would hold its own against the legions of Rome; and with this overmastering prejudice in their minds the Jews could not recognize the real Messiah when He came, and the day of their visitation escaped them. Yet it was this same political phrenzy of theirs which ultimately brought them into trouble with the Roman power; and if they had only understood the real meanings of their prejudices, had seen in their Messiah a spiritual monarch, and had accepted Him when He came, the mind of the people would have taken, must have taken, a totally different direction, and the fatal collision with the forces of Rome would never have taken place. (*Ibid.*)

Illness regarded as God's visitation:—There are two ways of looking at an illness. We may trace it to its second or immediate cause, the infection, the blood-poisoning, the imprudence, the hereditary taint, and there stop; or we may with greater reason look up to Him who is the true Lord of all, the first cause, and who worketh all things by the counsel of His own will; and if we do this last, we must see in an illness a visitation from God. He knows what we want. He sees, it may be, that in us which will never be corrected in the days of rude health and of high spirits; He sees the insensibility to the seriousness of life, to the claims of others, to the true interests of the soul, to the unfathomable love of the Divine Redeemer; and an illness which gives time for prayer, for reflection, for resolution, is a school of discipline. Those who have never had bad health are, it has been truly said, objects of anxiety; those who have had it, and who are none the better for it, are certainly objects of the very deepest concern and compassion. There was a story told many years since of a boat which was getting near the rapids above the Falls of Niagara. The boatmen managed to reach the shore, but, disregarding the advice which was earnestly given them, they put out again into the stream, with the object of crossing to the opposite bank. The current proved too strong for them, and those who had warned them of their danger looked on with a distress which was too great for words while the boat glided down with an ever-increasing speed to the edge of the falls. It is possible, brethren, in what concerns another life, to be in that condition, to have ignored God's last word of warning, and to be hurrying onwards, under the stress of influences which we cannot any longer resist or control, towards the awful future. Great reason is there for prayer, that at the critical turning-point of our career we may have, in our Lord's words, eyes to see and ears to hear, that we may distinguish God's visitations in life from what is ordinary in it; that we may remember that in every life, even in the most highly favoured, there is sooner or later a visitation which is the last. (*Ibid.*)

Guilty ignorance:—Well-known as these words are, there is in them something, when we think of it, unexpected; something different, apparently, from what we should have looked for. The condemnation of the people seems to be put upon a cause somewhat unlike what we might have thought. The Lord does not say, it is because ye are about to crucify the Lord of Glory; or, because ye have been a sinful and stiff-necked people; or, because by your traditions ye have made the Word of God of none effect; or, because ye are hypocrites, or impenitent: though all these things, and many more, were not only true against the people, but had often been alleged by Himself to their condemnation. He does not, I say, allege any of these broad, overt, intelligible sins in this, the last most solemn, irreversible denunciation of their judgment; but He says, "Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation!" God had visited His people, and they knew it not! He had come unto His own, and His own had known Him not. He does not even say, that they had pretended not to know Him; but, literally and plainly, that they knew Him not. They might have known

Him; they ought to have known Him; but He came, and they knew Him not. Let us learn, then, that men may really be quite ignorant of what they are doing, and yet very guilty, and involved in the heaviest condemnation. But, again, are we to suppose that they did not choose to know; that they might, then and there, by a stronger exercise of will, by some more forcible or candid purpose, have known what they thus willfully were ignorant of? It is possible that they might; but it is by no means certain: that is, it is by no means certain that much disobedience, much inattention to the constant indications of God's will vouchsafed to them, much neglect of opportunities, had not set them so much out of the way of forming right judgments on such things, as to make it morally impossible, or, at least, in the highest degree unlikely, that they should come to a right knowledge of the nature of our Lord and the sacredness of His mission. No doubt they had, if we may so speak, a great deal to say for themselves, in their firm and persevering rejection of our Lord and His doctrine; not, indeed, a word of real weight or truth, but a great deal which, urged by men in their state of mind, and addressed to men of their state of mind, would appear to be full of force and cogency. Would they not, feeling no doubt of the sacred validity of their own traditions, look upon Him and describe Him as one who made light of the authority of God, and of Moses, and the ancients? May we not easily suppose with what immense effect they would urge the impolicy of giving any heed to our Lord's teaching: the impolicy in respect of the Romans; the impolicy in respect of the great impediment which would, by our Lord's partial success, be thrown in the way of the true, temporal Messias, so long expected? If we suppose that the actions, which we criticize, appeared to the persons who were about to perform them in the same clear and unquestionable light in which we see them, we at once lose, or rather turn into mischief and hurt, the historical examples: we do exactly what the Jews did, when they said, "If we had lived in the times of our fathers, we would not have been partakers in their deeds," and yet filled up the measure of those very fathers, by doing a deed precisely like theirs in kind, though infinitely worse than theirs in degree. We comfort ourselves by condemning them, while we exactly imitate, or even exceed their sins. We, like them—like all mankind—are perpetually called upon to act; often suddenly—often in cases of great and obvious consequence—often in cases apparently slight, but really of most serious and vital importance to us: the same perplexities and bewilderments as I just described, of feeling, of policy, of liberality and candour, of conscience, of foreseen consequences, rise up around us; we act in more or less uncertainty of mind, but our uncertainties often woefully aggravated by our previous misconduct; and there are many to excuse us, many to encourage us, many to take part with us, and yet, in the sight of God, our act is one, it may be, of clear and undoubted sin. But again, the particular thing of which the Jews were in this instance ignorant, was the visitation of God. Christ had come to them, God had visited His people; and they, blinded by all these various kinds of self-deceit, of long-continued disobedience, of inveterate hardness of heart, and neglect of lesser indications of God's will and presence, had not known Him. Now here again is matter of high concern and warning to us all. For we, too, have our visitations of God; if not exactly such as this great one of Christ coming actually in the flesh, for us to worship or to crucify, according as our hearts recognize and know Him, or disown and rebel against Him, yet visitations many, various, and secret. But it by no means follows that we have known them. Some, indeed, may have been so striking as not to be mistaken. But many, perhaps most, perhaps the most searching and important, may have been absolutely unknown to us. And not less than this seems to be plainly taught by our Lord, where, in the 25th of St. Matthew, He describes the actual scene of judgment. The righteous and the wicked alike seem to be amazed to hear of the matters alleged for their acquittal and condemnation. How unexpected, then, may be to us the voice of judgment! (*Bishop Moberly.*)

Vers. 45, 46. *My house is the house of prayer.*—*The purified temple*:—Regarding the Church as an institution, with its possessions, its laws, its days of worship, its rulers, its teachers, its outward services, we may find for ourselves a lesson in this incident. And that lesson is, that the spiritual character of the Church is everything, and that its first object is to deepen in men's hearts the sense of the Divine and the spiritual. When that great end is lost sight of, the Church has parted with her strongest claims upon the world, and it has forfeited also its privilege as a witness for God on the earth. The spiritual influence is the first and chief

purpose of the Church of Christ. The lesson of this narrative comes home to us in these days, when so much time and thought are given to the outer framework of Church forms and usages; and that lesson may be needed to correct our spirit of bustling and restless energy in what is at the best only the machinery of spiritual life, and not spiritual life itself. There is no class of men who are more in danger of losing the true meaning of religion than those who are employed in its service. If I were to seek for cases in which spiritual truth had been travestied and turned to not only secular but profane purposes, I do not know that I could find them more readily than in men to whom all sacred words and acts have grown so familiar that they have ceased to express spiritual facts at all. Those who are always engaged in religious works are apt to lose the sense of their sacredness. No man more needs to be on his guard against an unspiritual life than the man who is perpetually employed in spiritual offices. He brings within the courts of God's house what ought to be left without; he forgets his high spiritual functions in the bustle and care which attend them; and it is really no absolute guarantee of a religious and spiritual life that a man's profession is the teaching of religion. Christ's words and acts read us all a lesson, then; they tell us that in the most sacred occupations of life there may be found cares and anxieties which are less religious, and which are apt to swallow up too much of a man's time and thoughts. There is another temple of a different kind, of which a word may be said. The whole Christian body is, in the words of the New Testament, a temple of God. There is a sacredness in that temple, the spiritual community of Christians, if we would only think of it, much greater than in the Temple of Jerusalem, or in any building devoted to holy uses. And just as the whole Christian community is a temple sacred to God, so each individual heart is in itself a temple where God Most High is honoured and worshipped. (*A. Watson, D.D.*) *Lessons from Christ's cleansing of the temple:—*1. Abuses are apt to creep into the Church. Let us be on our guard against their first introduction. 2. The Church is much indebted, under God, to those who have had the courage to stand forward as real reformers. Hezekiah; Josiah; the English reformers. They are indeed the benefactors of the Church who successfully exert themselves to correct doctrinal and practical errors, and to promote the scriptural administration of ordinances, discipline, and government. Thus, the progress of corruption is arrested, the beauty of Christianity is restored, and the glory of God, and the religious, and even civil, interests of men are promoted. 3. It is the duty of us all, according to our several places and stations, to do what we can to reform whatever abuses may exist in the Church in our own times. 4. Let this purification of the temple lead us to seek the purification of our own hearts. 5. In all we attempt for the benefit of others, or of ourselves, let us imitate the zeal which our Master displayed on this occasion. To be useful to man, or acceptable to God, we must be deeply in earnest—we must have the Spirit of Christ in this respect. Neither fear, nor shame, nor sinful inclination should restrain us in such cases. (*James Foote, M.A.*) *Christ's indignation aroused by irreverence:—*In contemplating this action we are at first sight startled by its peremptoriness. "Is this," we say to ourselves—"is this He who is called the Lamb of God? He of whom prophecy said that He should neither strive nor cry; He who said of Himself, "Come to Me; I am meek and lowly of heart"? Is there not some incongruity between that meek and gentle character and those vehement acts and words. No, my brethren, there is no incongruity. As the anger which is divorced from meekness is but unsanctified passion, so the false meekness which can never kindle at the sight of wrong into indignation, is closely allied, depend upon it, to moral collapse. One of the worst things that the inspired Psalmist can find it in his heart to say of a man is, "Neither doth he abhor anything that is evil." Bishop Butler has shown that anger, being a part of our natural constitution is intended by our Maker to be excited, to be exercised upon certain legitimate objects; and the reason why anger is as a matter of fact generally sinful is, because it is generally wielded, not by our sense of absolute right and truth, but by our self-love, and, therefore, on wrong and needless occasions. Our Lord's swift indignation was just as much a part of His perfect sanctity as was His silent meekness in the hour of His passion. We may dare to say it, that He could not, being Himself, have been silent in that temple court, for that which met His eye was an offence first against the eighth commandment of the Decalogue. The money brokers were habitually fraudulent. But then this does not explain His treatment of the sellers of the doves, which shows that He saw in the whole transaction an offence against the first and second commandments. All irreverence is really, when we get to

the bottom of it, unbelief. The first great truth that we know is the solitary supremacy of the Eternal God; the second, which is its consequence, the exacting character of His love. God is said, in the second commandment, to be a "jealous God." (*Canon Liddon.*) *Christ dealt immediately with wrong*:—What He might have done! He might have said, "Well, this temple will one day, and that day not far distant, be thrown down. I shall not interfere with this abuse now, because in the natural order of things it will be overturned along with this structure." Jesus Christ did not know what it was to trifle so. I don't know that Jesus Christ knew the meaning of the word expediency, as we sometimes prostitute it. He saw wrong. If that wrong would in five minutes work itself out, that was no consideration to Him. Meanwhile, to Him five minutes was eternity! (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The cleansing of the temple*:—I shall endeavour to call your attention to one or two of the most marked features. And in the first place, I would bid you notice our blessed Lord's zeal, that zeal of which the Psalmist said, speaking prophetically, "the zeal of Thine house hath even eaten me" (*Psa. lxi. 9*). 2. But again, the conduct of our Lord shows us the reverence that is due to God's house. The Jewish temple was emphatically a "house of prayer," it was a place where God had promised His special presence to those who came to worship. And there are some things which, like oxen and sheep, are things not clean enough to be brought into the temple of God; all evil feelings, and pride, and unkindness, and envy, and self-conceit, and other wicked emotions may not be brought into God's temple; they must be driven out with scourges, they must not be tolerated. Then also there are some things which, like the doves, though pure in themselves, have no business in the temple of God; the cares of this world, things necessarily engaging our attention at other times, may not enter these doors: God's church is intended to be as it were a little enclosed spot where worldly things may not enter. But again, the tables of money-changers must not be here; this is no place for thoughts of gain, it is a profanation of God's temple to bring them here. And, lastly, Christian brethren, we cannot but be reminded, by our Lord's cleansing of the temple in the days of His flesh, of that awful cleansing of His temple which will one day take place, when all that is vile and offensive shall be cast out of His temple, and everything that maketh a lie cast into the lake of brimstone. (*H. Goodwin, M.A.*) *The house of prayer*:—I. Our first inquiry is—WHAT IS OUR LORD'S VIEW AS TO THE PURPOSE AND END WHICH HE DESIGNS HIS EARTHLY TEMPLES TO SERVE? And this is the answer—"My house is the house of prayer." He calls us here to pray. The work to which He sets us in the sanctuary is mainly devotional. 1. As first, that common or united prayer is needful for man. Prayer itself is almost an instinct of nature. Man must worship. And he must worship in company; he must pray with others. 2. Another observation which the Divine idea in regard to the earthly sanctuary suggests is, that common or united prayer is acceptable to God. 3. Common or united prayer is efficacious to obtain Divine gifts. Otherwise, God would not assign to it so foremost a position in the worship of the sanctuary. II. MAN'S DEPARTURE FROM THIS DIVINE IDEA ABOUT THE HOUSE OF GOD ON EARTH. "Ye have made it a den of thieves." There is man's perversion of God's design. You know, of course, what the particular sin was which these words of our Lord were intended to reprove. It was the appropriation on the part of these Jews of a portion of the temple enclosure to purposes of worldly barter. This was the way in which the Jewish people lost sight of the Divine idea in regard to their temple. And though it is not possible for men now to commit precisely the same offence, I fear it would not be difficult to trace a corresponding sin, even in the present altered condition of the church. It is possible now to desecrate sacred places and offices to purposes of worldly gain. It is possible to make a traffic of spiritual functions and emoluments. But, my friends, these are not the only things in which a departure from God's idea about His sanctuary may be marked now. There are others, of another complexion and character, it is true, but not the less to be reprehended. It is to these that I would more especially call your attention. 1. Let me say, then, that some pervert God's idea by making the house of prayer a house of preaching. With them the sermon is almost everything. They are impatient of all else to get to that. Prayers, and lessons, and psalms, and creeds, are all just to be endured as a sort of preliminary to that. 2. I remark again, that some depart from God's intention with respect to the sanctuary by making the house of prayer "a house of mere Sunday resort." They must pass the day somewhere; they must get through it somehow, and so, as it is customary, and seemly, and respectable, they will go to church. They are as well there, they think, as anywhere else, but, alas! this is all. 3. I remark, in the

next place, that some pervert this design by making the house of prayer "a house of formal service." Their service is no more than lip service. (*C. M. Merry.*) "*My house is the house of prayer* :—Nor are there wanting examples, in all succeeding ages, of the conscientious and religious regularity with which the faithful ever attended the public means of grace. Thus, for example, "Zacharias and Elizabeth walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." The just and devout Simeon "waited for the consolation of Israel, and came by the Spirit into the temple of the Lord." These, so striking examples of such excellent men, and the uniform and continuous practice of the faithful in all ages, show that the public worship of God is an institution of Divine authority. That there is a God is the first suggestion of unassisted reason, and that God ought to be worshipped is the foundation and first principle of all religion. Accordingly, we have reason to believe, that public worship began with the beginning of the world, and that it has been continued and maintained in all countries and in all times, and under every form of religion that man has devised or God instituted. The ancient Jews for example, dedicated a seventh part of their time to the service and worship of God. We may also remark, that, from the earliest ages, not only particular times, but also particular places, were set apart and consecrated to these sacred services. In the darkest times of heathen idolatry, when there were "gods many, and lords many," magnificent temples were built, stately altars erected, costly sacrifices offered, solemn rites celebrated, and the elegant arts of painting and sculpture, poetry and music, were called into the service of dumb idols. In after times, when the children of Israel were in the wilderness, and had no fixed nor settled abode, the tabernacle was erected by God's special command, and richly endowed with sacred utensils and ornaments for His solemn worship. I. PUBLIC WORSHIP IS CALCULATED TO DISPLAY THE GLORY OF GOD. As the court of an earthly monarch derives its dignity from the splendour and number of its attendants, so the church, "the court of the Lord," shows forth the majesty of the Most High by its multitudes of humble worshippers. II. PUBLIC WORSHIP IS ALSO CALCULATED TO PROMOTE AND PERPETUATE THE PRACTICE OF PURE AND UNDEFILED RELIGION. Prayer kindles and keeps up the spirit of piety in the soul. And if the "house of prayer" be thus holy, how great should be the purity of those who frequent it? Here, again, let the royal Psalmist be our director, "Praise is comely for the upright." (*A. McEwen.*) *The house of prayer* :—"My house is the house of prayer." This is as true of that portion of the holy body which we call the Church visible or militant as it is of the rest. The object of the visible Church is not solely philanthropic, although the Church's duty is to do good unto all men, specially to them that are of the household of faith. It is not solely the moral perfection of its members, although the purification to Himself of a peculiar people zealous of good works was certainly a main object of its founder; still less is it the prosecution of inquiry or speculation, however interesting about God, because we already know all that we ever really shall know in this state about Him. We have on our lips and in our hearts the faith that was once delivered to the saints. This temple, visible and invisible, is thus organized by its Divine founder throughout earth and heaven to be a whole of ceaseless communion with God; and as its heavenly members never, never for one moment cease in their blessed work, so by prayers, broken though they be and interrupted—by prayers and intercessions, by thanksgiving and praise, private and public, mental and vocal, the holy Church throughout the world doth acknowledge Him who is the common centre of light and love to all its members, whether on this side the veil or beyond it. Into this temple also there sometimes intrudes that which moves the anger of the Son of Man, for this spiritual society has its place among men. It is in the world, although not of it, and it thus sometimes admits within its courts that which cannot bear the glance of the All-Holy. And especially is this apt to be the case when the Church of Christ has been for many ages bound up with the life and history of a great nation, and is, what we call in modern language, established—that is to say, recognized by the State, and secured in its property and position by legal enactments. I am far from denying that this state of things is or may be a very great blessing, that it secures to religion a prominence and a consideration among the people at large, which would else be wanting to it, that it visibly asserts before men the true place of God as the ruler and guide of national destiny; but it is also undeniable that such a state of things may bring with it danger from which less favoured churches escape. To be forewarned, let us trust, is to be forearmed; but whenever it happens to a great Church, or to its guiding minds, to think more of the secular side of its position than they think

of the spiritual—more, it may be, of a seat in the Senate and of high social rank than of the work of God among the people; if, in order to save income and position in times of real or supposed peril, there is any willingness to barter away the safeguards of the faith, or to silence the pleadings of generosity and justice in deference to some uninstructed clamour—then be sure that, unless history is at fault as well as Scripture, we may listen for the footfalls of the Son of Man on the outer threshold of the temple, and we shall not long listen in vain. Churches are disestablished and disendowed to the eye of sense, through the action of political parties; to the eye of faith by His interference who ordereth all things both in heaven and in earth, and who rules at this moment on the same principles as those which of old led Him to cleanse His Father's temple in Jerusalem. (*Canon Liddon.*) *God's house a house of prayer:*—"My house shall be called the house of prayer." Here is a law for the furniture and equipment; here is a definition of the object and purpose of a material Christian church. There are great differences, no doubt, between the Jewish Temple and a building dedicated to Christian worship; but over the portals of each there might be traced with equal propriety the words, "My house shall be called the house of prayer." No well-instructed, no really spiritual Christian thinks of his parish church mainly or chiefly as a place for hearing sermons. Sermons are of great service, especially when people are making their first acquaintance with practical Christianity, and they occupy so great a place in the Acts of the Apostles, because they were of necessity the instrument with which the first teachers of Christianity made their way among unconverted Jews and heathens. Nay, more, since amid the importunities of this world of sense and time the soul of man is constantly tending to close its eyes to the unseen, to the dangers which so on every side beset it, to the pre-eminent claims of its Redeemer and its God, sermons which repeat with unwearied earnestness the same solemn certainties about God and man, about the person, and work, and gifts of Christ, about life and death, about the fleeting present and the endless future, are a vital feature in the activity of every Christian Church, a means of calling the unbelieving and the careless to the foot of the cross, a means of strengthening and edifying the faithful. Still, if a comparison is to be instituted between prayers and sermons, there ought not to be a moment's doubt as to the decision; for it is not said, "My house shall be called a house of preaching," but "My house shall be called the house of prayer." Surely it is a much more responsible act, and, let me add, it is a much greater privilege, to speak to God, whether in prayer or praise, than to listen to what a fellow-sinner can tell you about Him; and when a great congregation is really joining in worship, when there is a deep spiritual, as it were an electric, current of sympathy traversing a vast multitude of souls as they make one combined advance to the foot of the eternal throne, then, if we could look at these things for a moment with angels' eyes, we should see something infinitely greater, according to all the rules of a true spiritual measurement, than the effect of the most eloquent and the most persuasive of sermons. "My house shall be called the house of prayer" is a maxim for all time, and if this be so, then all that meets the eye, all that falls upon the ear within the sacred walls, should be in harmony with this high intention, should be valued and used only with a view to promoting it. Architecture, painting, mural decoration, and the like, are only in place when they lift the soul upwards towards the invisible, when they conduct it swiftly and surely to the gate of the world of spirits, and then themselves retire from thought and from view. Music the most pathetic, the most suggestive, is only welcome in the temples of Christ, when it gives wings to spiritualized thought and feeling, when it promotes the ascent of the soul to God. If these beautiful arts detain men on their own account, to wonder at their own intrinsic charms, down among the things of sense; if we are thinking more of music than of Him whose glory it heralds, more of the beauty of form and colour than of Him whose Temple it adorns, then be sure we are robbing God of His glory, we are turning His Temple into a den of thieves. No error is without its element of truth, and jealousy on this point was the strength of Puritanism, which made it a power notwithstanding its violence, notwithstanding its falsehood. And as for purely secular conversations within these walls, how unworthy are they in view of our Redeemer's words! Time was, under the first two Stuarts, when the nave of the old St. Paul's was a rendezvous for business, for pleasure, for public gossiping, so that Evelyn the diarist, lamenting the deplorable state to which the great church was reduced, says that it was already named a den of thieves. Is it too much to say that the Redeemer was not long in punishing the desecration of His Temple?

First there came the axes and hammers of the rebellion, and then there came the swift tongues of fire in 1660, and the finest cathedral that England ever saw went its way. Would that in better times we were less constantly unmindful of the truth that its successor is neither a museum of sculpture nor yet a concert-room, and that He whose house it is will not be robbed of His rights with permanent impunity. (*Ibid.*) *The regenerate soul is a house of prayer*:—"My house shall be called the house of prayer." This is true of every regenerate soul. When it is in a state of grace the soul of man is a temple of the Divine presence. "If any man love Me, and will keep My words, My Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." Christ's throne within the soul enlightens the understanding, and kindles the affections, and braces the will, and while He thus from His presence-chamber in this His spiritual palace, issues His orders hour by hour to its thinking and acting powers, He receives in return the homage of faith and love, a sacrifice which they delight to present to Him. So it is with God's true servants, but alas! my brethren, if you and I compare notes, what shall we say? Even when we desire to pray we find ourselves in the outer court of the soul surrounded all at once with the tables of the money-changers, and with the seats of the men who sell the doves. Our business, with all its details, follows us in the churches, follows us into our private chambers, follows us everywhere into the presence of our God. Our preparations for religious service, the accidents of our service, occupy the attention which is due to the service itself. Sometimes, alas! we do not even try to make the very first steps towards real prayer, and steps which ordinary natural reverence would suggest; we lounge, we look about us, just as though nothing in the world were of less importance than to address the Infinite and Eternal God. But sometimes, alas! we do close the eyes, we do bend the knee, we try to put force upon the soul's powers and faculties, and to lead them forth one by one, and then collectively to the footstool of the King of kings; when, lo! they linger over this memory or that, they are burdened with this or that load of care, utterly foreign to the work in hand. They bend, it is true, in an awkward sort of way in the sacred presence beneath, not their sense of its majesty, not their sense of the love and the beauty of God, but the vast and incongruous weight of worldliness which prevents their realizing it. And when a soul is thus at its best moments fatally troubled and burdened about many things, God in His mercy bides His time; He cleanses the courts of a Temple which He has predestined to be His for ever, He cleanses it in His own time and way; He sends some sharp sorrow which sweeps from the soul all thoughts save one, the nothingness, the vanity of all that is here below; and so He forces that soul to turn by one mighty, all-comprehending act to Himself, who alone can satisfy it; or He lays a man upon a bed of sickness, leaving the mind with all its powers intact, but stripping from the body all the faculties of speech and motion, and then through the long, weary hours the man is turned in upon himself; and if there is any hope for him at all, if at that critical moment he is at all alive to the tender pleadings of the All-merciful, he will with his own hands cleanse the temple; he sees the paltriness of the trifles that have kept him back from his chiefest, from his only good; he expels first one and then another unworthy intruder upon the sacred ground. The scourge is sharp, the resistance it may be persevering; the hours are long, and they are weary, but the work is done at last. (*Ibid.*) *Irreverence rebuked*:—"When Walter Hook (afterwards Dean of Chichester) was Vicar of Coventry, he was once presiding at a vestry meeting which was so largely attended as to necessitate an adjournment to the church. Several persons kept their hats on. The vicar requested them to take them off, but they refused. "Very well, gentlemen," he replied, "but remember that in *this* house the insult is not done to me, but to your God." The hats were immediately taken off.

CHAPTER XX.

VMS. 9-19. A certain man planted a vineyard.—*Lessons*:—1. Let us be thankful that God has planted His vineyard among us. We are situated, not in any of the deserts, or wastes, or commons, of the world, but in the vineyard, in "a garden inclosed," in the very garden of the Lord. 2. Let us inquire whether we be

rendering to the Lord of the vineyard the fruit which He expects in its season. 3. Beware of resembling these wicked husbandmen in their conduct, lest you also resemble them in their doom. What reception, then, are you giving to God's ministers, and especially to God's beloved Son? 4. In the last place, see that you give to the Lord Jesus that place in your spiritual building which is His due. Let Him be both at its foundation and at its top. Let Him be both "the author and the finisher of your faith." (*J. Foote, M.A.*)

God's manifold mercy:—Like the drops of a lustre, which reflect a rainbow of colours when the sun is glittering upon them, and each one, when turned in different ways, from its prismatic form shows all the varieties of colour, so the mercy of God is one and yet many, the same yet ever changing, a combination of all the beauties of love blended harmoniously together. You have only to look at mercy in that light, and that light, and that light, to see how rich, how manifold it is. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Fruitfulness the test of value:—Years ago in Mentone they estimated the value of land by the number of olive-trees upon it. How many bearers of the precious oil were yielding their produce? That was the question which settled the value of the plot. Is not this the true way of estimating the importance of a Christian Church? Mere size is no criterion; wealth is even a more deceiving measure, and rank and education are no better. How many are bearing fruit unto the Lord in holy living, in devout intercession, in earnest efforts for soul winning, and in other methods by which fruit is brought forth unto the Lord? (*Sword and Trowel.*)

Abused mercy:—Nothing so cold as lead, yet nothing more scalding if molten; nothing more blunt than iron, and yet nothing so keen if sharpened; the air is soft and tender, yet out of it are engendered thunderings and lightnings; the sea is calm and smooth, but if tossed with tempests it is rough beyond measure. Thus it is that mercy abused turns to fury; God, as He is a God of mercies, so He is a God of judgment; and it is a fearful thing to fall into His punishing hands. He is loath to strike, but when He strikes, He strikes home. If His wrath be kindled, yea, but a little, woe be to all those on whom it lights; how much more when He is sore displeased with a people or person! (*John Trapp.*)

The Son rejected:—Turning to the parable, notice—I. THE OWNER'S CLAIM. His right and authority are complete. God presses His right to our love and service. Blessings are privileges, and privileges are obligations. II. THE OWNER'S LOVING PATIENCE. There never was an earthly employer who showed such persistent kindness towards such persistent rebellion. The account of servants sent again and again, in spite of insults and death, is a faint picture of His forbearance towards Israel. Mercies, deliverances, revelations, pleadings, gather, a shining host, around all their history, as the angelic camp was close to Jacob on his journey. But all along the history stand the dark and blood-stained images of mercies despised and prophets slain. The tenderness of God in the old dispensation is wonderful; but in Christ it appears in a pathos of yearning. III. THE REJECTION. IV. THE JUDGMENT. It was just, necessary, complete, remediless. V. THE FINAL EXALTATION OF THE SON. (*Charles M. Southgate.*)

The rejected Son:—I. GOD'S INTEREST IN HIS VINEYARD. The great truths of the Old Testament are from the prophets rather than from the priests. The grand progress of truth has depended upon these fearless men. The age without its prophet has been stagnated. The priesthood is conservative; prophecy, progressive. The true prophet is always great; truth makes men great. Only by a clear understanding of the accumulating prophecies of the Old Testament can we appreciate the Divine care. In this lesson as to the care of God for His vineyard, Christ has marked the distinction between the functions of the prophets and Himself. They had spoken as servants; He as the Son. In such a comparison is seen the transcendent revelation of God in Christ. He was the heir. The interests of the Father were identical with His own. It was in such a comparison that Christ declared the infinite grace of God in the incarnation and its purpose. II. THE IRREVERENCE OF MEN. The whole attitude of God toward His Church is that of an infinite condescension and pity. 1. The attitude of these men toward the truth. The greatest conflicts have been between the truth of God and the personal desires of men. 2. The antagonism is manifested in the treatment of those who are righteous. In one sense he who accepts a truth becomes its personation, and as a consequence must bear all the malignity of those who hate that same truth. Witness the treatment of the prophets in evidence. Because Micaiah uttered that which was displeasing to the government of Israel he was scourged and imprisoned. Because the prophet Jeremiah gave an unwelcome prophecy to his king, although it was the word of the Lord, he was thrown into a dungeon for his courage. No better fate awaited

the prophet Isaiah than to be sawn asunder by order of the ruler of God's chosen people. It was the high priest who obtained a decree for the expulsion of Amos from Jerusalem. 3. This antagonism to the prophets of the truth is only a lesser expression of a burning hatred toward God. The spirit of hatred to the prophets would result in the killing of the Son of God. Whether the truth or man or God stands in the way of this lust for power, the result is the same. III. THE POWER OF THE PEOPLE. Repeatedly this truth is brought out in the life of Christ. "They sought to lay hold on Him, but feared the people." In these few words we recognize the corrective of the terrible accusation against human nature. If such a history is the expression of what is universal, then we must discern the fact that the truth is more safe in the hands of the many than of the few. IV. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE OWNER OF THE VINEYARD. In the parallel account of this parable in Matthew, we read the question of Christ: "When the lord, therefore, of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?" In all history this same truth has been often witnessed. The rejecters of God are self-rejected from Him. The power that is not used for God is taken from us and given to those who will use it. There are two practical suggestions very intimately connected with this theme that we briefly notice. First: The greatest hindrance to Christ's kingdom may come from those who are the highest in the administration of its affairs. Second: The stupidity of wickedness. These very men who robbed God were robbing themselves. By planning to possess the vineyard they lost it. By attempting to keep the owner away they cast themselves out. God controls His own kingdom and Church. "The stone which the builders rejected, is become the head of the corner: this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." (D. O. Mears.) *Parable of the vineyard let to husbandmen.*—I. THE MATERIALS OF WHICH THE PARABLE IS COMPOSED are objects which were familiar in Palestine, or common in warm countries; a vineyard, a proprietor, and tenants. II. Let us next attend to THE OBJECTS WHICH OUR SAVIOUR HAD IN VIEW IN DELIVERING THIS PARABLE; or, what is the same thing, inquire what are the important truths contained in it. The objects of our Saviour in this parable seem to be—1. To point out the singular advantages bestowed on the Jews as a nation. 2. Their conduct. 3. Their punishment. 4. The transference of their advantages to others. Inferences: 1. From this passage we may learn that we, as Christians, possess a portion of that kingdom which the Lord Jesus came to establish. For the Christians came in the place of the Jews. This kingdom consists in privileges, in blessings, in superior knowledge, and superior means of improvement. Of those privileges we have much cause to be grateful, but none whatever to be proud. For they were not given because we were better than other nations: but they were bestowed solely that we might cultivate and improve them, and become the blessed instruments of conveying them to others. 2. That if we cease to bring forth the fruit of holiness, the kingdom of God will also be taken from us. God has given us much, and therefore of us much will be required. (J. Thomson, D.D.) *The Herodians and Pharisees combined against Jesus.*—1. The combination of men of opposite sentiments, in a particular case, affords no proof that truth and justice are connected with their temporary union. 2. In the conduct of the scribes and Pharisees on this occasion we see the disgraceful artifices which malice leads men to employ. 3. From this passage we may observe the perfect knowledge which Jesus had of the characters, principles, and intentions of His enemies. 4. The wisdom of Jesus was also conspicuous on this occasion. Had He been a mere man, we should have said He was distinguished by presence of mind. Now His wisdom is strongly displayed here. He might have refused to answer the question of the Pharisees and Herodians, as the Pharisees had done to Him. Or He might have given some dark enigmatical reply which they could not have perverted. But, instead of doing so, He gave a plain decided answer, without fear or evasion. 5. The fearless regard to truth which the Lord Jesus displayed on this occasion deserves to be carefully noticed. He did not mean to decline answering the question, Whether it was lawful to pay taxes to Cæsar. On the contrary, He instantly declared that it was lawful; and not only lawful, but obligatory, as they themselves had unwillingly confessed. For the allusion to the denarius struck them forcibly; and they went away admiring the person whom they had come to expose and overwhelm. 6. Lastly, we may observe the disposition which our Saviour always showed to direct the attention of His hearers to the duty which they owed to God. If, then, we are to render to God the things that are God's, we must render everything to God; for everything we have belongs to Him—our capacities, our opportunities, our

advantages, our blessings. (*Ibid.*) It will grind him to powder.—*The madness of opposing Christ*.—"It is said that a hundred thousand birds fly against the lights of the lighthouses along the Atlantic coast of the United States, and are killed annually." So says a slip cut from this morning's newspaper. We need not be afraid in these excited times that captious cavillers will put out our hope. The dark wild birds of the ocean keep coming forth from the mysterious caverns; they seem to hate the glitter of the lenses. They continue to dash themselves upon the thick panes of glass in the windows. But they usually end by beating their wings to pieces on the unyielding crystal till they fall dead in the surf rolling below. (*C. S. Robinson, D.D.*) *The wreck of infidelity*.—Some years ago, a man and his wife were found living in a wretched broken-down house in a low part of London; and although the husband was down with illness, his only bed was a little straw, with a coarse dirty wrapper for a covering, and a brick for a pillow. An old chair and a saucepan appeared to be the only other furniture on the premises, while the wife in attendance was subject to fits, which made her for the time more like a wild animal than a woman. Though reduced to so wretched a condition, this man was really gifted and educated; and in days of health and strength he had worked with his pen for an infidel publisher. What, then, was the cause of his downfall? It so happened that the sufferer answered this question himself; for, casting his dull, leaden-looking eyes around the room after a visitor had entered, he remarked, "This is the wreck of infidelity!"

Vers. 20-26. They watched Him.—Christ was watched, and so are we:—The chief priests and rulers of the Jews watched Jesus, but not to learn the way of salvation. They watched Him with the evil eyes of malice and hatred, desiring to take hold of His words, to entangle Him in His talk, that they might accuse Him, and deliver Him up to die. He loved all men, yet He was hated and rejected of men; He went about doing good, yet they tried to do Him harm. The enemies of Christ are ever watching for our fall, eager to hear or to tell any evil thing about us, ready to cast the stone of slander against us. You know that the whitest robe first shows the stain, let us remember whose purity we wear if we have put on Christ. Let us strive "to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." If we are tempted to say or do something which is equivocal, though the way of the world, let us pause and ask ourselves whether it will bring discredit on our faith, whether it will dishonour our Master. But there are others who watch us, and in a different manner. The Church in Paradise watches the Church on earth and prays for it. Our path of life is compassed by a great cloud of witnesses; the saints who have fought the battle and won the crown, they watch us. St. Paul, resting after his good fight, and his many perils, is watching to see how we are fighting against sin, the world, and the devil. St. Peter, restored to the side of Jesus, watches to see if any of us deny their Lord. St. Thomas, no longer doubtful, watches to see if our faith be strong. Holy Stephen watches us when the stones of insult and persecution assail us; the forty martyrs, who died for Jesus on the frozen pool at Sebaste, watch us when the world looks coldly on us, and many another who passed through fire and water watches us in our battle and the race that is set before us. Thus with the enemies of God watching for our fall, and the saints of God watching for our victory, let us watch ourselves, and let our cry be, "Hold Thou me up that my footsteps slip not." (*H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, M.A.*) *Cowards are like cats*.—Cowards are like cats. Cats always take their prey by springing suddenly upon it from some concealed station, and, if they miss their aim in the first attack, rarely follow it up. They are all, accordingly, cowardly, sneaking animals, and never willingly face their enemy, unless brought to bay, or wounded, trusting always to their power of surprising their victims by the aid of their stealthy and noiseless movements. (*Dallas, "Natural History of the Animal Kingdom."*) *Whose image and superscription hath it?*—*The Divine image in the soul*.—1. The Divine image ought to be our highest glory. 2. Let the Divine image which we bear be a constant exhortation to serve God. 3. Never defile the Divine image by sin. 4. Endeavour to increase every day the beauty of the Divine image. 5. Respect the Divine image in your neighbour. (*Bishop Ehrler.*) *Man is God's property*.—More than all visible things, we ourselves, with the faculties of body and soul, are God's. Man is God's image, God's coin, and therefore belongs to God entirely. I. ON WHAT IS THIS DIVINE OWNERSHIP FOUNDED? 1. On creation. Man is God's property. (1) As God's creature. All that is created belongs to God, by whose omnipotence it was made. (2) As God's creature he bears the Divine

image. 2. On redemption. (1) The soul of the first man was a supernatural image of God, created in original justice and sanctity. (2) In consequence of the first sin, the soul was deprived of sanctifying grace (Rom. v. 12). (3) God had compassion on man, and found means (through the Incarnation) to restore His image in the human soul. II. CONSEQUENCES RESULTING FROM THIS DIVINE OWNERSHIP. 1. We should render to God our soul. (1) Our understanding. (2) Our will. (3) Our heart. 2. Our body and all its members. (*Grimm.*) *The medal made useful*:—One day, when Martin Luther was completely penniless, he was asked for money to aid an important Christian enterprise. He reflected a little, and recollected that he had a beautiful medal of Joachim, Elector of Brandenburg, which he very much prized. He went immediately to a drawer, opened it, and said: "What art thou doing there, Joachim? Dost thou not see how idle thou art? Come out and make thyself useful." Then he took out the medal and contributed it to the object solicited for. *Render unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's.—Cæsar's due and God's due*:—I. THAT KINGS AND PRINCES HAVE A CERTAIN RIGHT AND DUE PERTAINING TO THEM BY GOD'S APPOINTMENT, WHICH IT IS NOT LAWFUL FOR ANY MAN TO KEEP FROM THEM. This is plain here as if Christ had said: "It is of God, and not without the disposing and ordering of His Providence, that the Roman Emperor hath put in his foot among you, and is now your liege and sovereign: you yourselves have submitted to his government, and have in a manner subscribed unto that which God hath brought upon you; now, certainly, there is a right pertaining to him respectively to his place. This he must have, and it cannot be lawful for you, under any pretext, to take it from him." So that this speech is a plain ground for this. But what is Cæsar's due? 1. Prayer for him (1 Tim. ii. 1). (1) That he may be endowed with all needful graces for his place. (a) Wisdom. (b) Justice. (c) Temperance, *i.e.*, sobriety and moderation in diet, in apparel, in delight, &c. (d) Zeal and courage in God's matters. This it is which will make kings prosper (1 Kings ii. 2, 3). (2) That he may be delivered from all dangers to which he is subject in his place. Kings are in danger of two sorts of enemies. (a) Enemies to their bodies and outward state. Traitors. Conspirators. (b) Enemies to their souls. Flatterers. 2. Submission to him. By this I mean "an awful framing and composing of the whole man respectively to his authority." And now here, because I mention the whole man, and man consisteth of two parts; therefore I will declare, first, what is the submission of the inner man due to a king by the Word of God; and then, what is the submission of the outward man. 1. Touching the submission of the inner man, I account the substance of it to be this—"A reverent and dutiful estimation of him in regard of his place." "Fear the Lord and the king," said Solomon. As the "fearing of God" argueth an inward respectiveness to His Divine majesty, so the fearing of the king intends the like, the heart carrieth a kind of reverent awe unto him. And this is that honouring the king which St. Peter giveth charge of (1 Pet. ii. 17). Honour is properly an inward act, and we honour a superior when our respect is to him according to his dignity. That this reverent estimation of a king, which I term the substance of inward submission, may be the better understood, we must consider touching it two things. (1) The ground of it is a right understanding of the state and condition of a king's place. (a) Its eminence. (b) Its usefulness. (2) Now the companion of this reverent esteem of Cæsar is a ready and willing disposition to perform to him and for him any service he may require. 2. I come now to speak of the outward submission, which is that which is for the testification and manifestation of the inward. An outward submissiveness without an inward awfulness were but hypocrisy; to pretend an inward respect without giving outward evidence thereof, were but mockery. This outward submission is either in word or in action. It includes—(1) Conformity to the laws. (2) Yielding of the person in time of war. (3) Furnishing supplies. II. THAT IT IS NOT LAWFUL FOR ANY MAN TO DEPRIVE ALMIGHTY GOD OF THAT WHICH IS HIS DUE. "You are careful," saith our Saviour, "as it seemeth, to inquire touching Cæsar's right, as if you were so tender-conscienced that you would not keep ought from him that were his. It becometh you to be, at the least, as careful for God; there is a right also due to Him, look you to it, that you give it Him." Thus is the doctrine raised, God must have His due as well as the king his. Nay, He is to have it much more; "He is the King of kings, and Lord of lords. By Him it is that earthly kings do reign. He beareth rule over the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whosoever He will." Let me begin by explaining what is here meant by the Lord's due. The conscionable performance of any good duty is in some sense the Lord's due, because the same

is required by Him; and so even that which was spoken of before, by the name of Cæsar's due, is God's due, because the law of God binds us to it. When we speak, therefore, of God's due, we intend thereby that which is more properly and more immediately belonging to Him. For example's sake—in a house, whereof every room and corner is the master's, yet that where he lieth himself is more particularly called his; so whereas all good services, even those which appertain to men, are the Lord's, He being the commander of them, yet those are more precisely and specially termed His which belong to Him more directly. And of the dues of this sort we are now to treat; and these may justly be referred to two general heads. The first I may call His "prerogative," the other His "worship." Under God's "prerogative" I comprehend two things. 1. "That the things which concern Him must have the pre-eminence." 2. "That He must have absolute obedience in all things." And now I come to the next part of His due, "His worship." By His worship is understood that more direct and proper service which we do to God for the declaration of our duty to Him, of our dependence on Him, and of our acknowledgment both to expect and to receive all good and comfort from Him. Here the particulars to be considered of, under this head of worship, are—1. "That He must be worshipped." 2. "That He must be so worshipped as Himself thinks good." (*S. Hieron.*) *Duty discriminated*:—"Go with me to the concert this afternoon?" once asked a fashionable city salesman of a new assistant in the warehouse. "I cannot." "Why?" "My time is not my own; it belongs to another." "To whom?" "To the firm, by whom I have been instructed not to leave without permission." The next Sabbath afternoon the same salesman said to this clerk, "Will you go to ride with us this evening?" "I cannot." "Why?" "My time is not my own; it belongs to another." "To whom?" "To Him who has said, 'Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy.'" Some years passed, and that clerk lay upon his bed of death. His honesty and fidelity had raised him to a creditable position in business and in society, and, ere his sickness, life lay fair before him. "Are you reconciled to your situation?" asked an attendant. "Yes, reconciled; I have endeavoured to do the work that God has allotted me, in His fear. He has directed me thus far; I am in His hands, and my time is not my own." (*W. Bazendale.*) *Religion and politics*:—It is a common saying that religion has nothing to do with politics, and particularly there is a strong feeling current against all interference with politics by the ministers of religion. This notion rests on a basis which is partly wrong, partly right. To say that religion has nothing to do with politics is to assert that which is simply false. It were as wise to say that the atmosphere has nothing to do with the principles of architecture. Directly nothing, indirectly much. Some kinds of stone are so friable, that though they will last for centuries in a dry climate, they will crumble away in a few years in a damp one. There are some temperatures in which a form of a building is indispensable, which in another would be unbearable. The shape of doors, windows, apartments, all depend upon the air that is to be admitted or excluded. Nay, it is for the very sake of procuring a habitable atmosphere within certain limits that architecture exists at all. The atmospheric laws are distinct from the laws of architecture; but there is not an architectural question into which atmospheric considerations do not enter as conditions of the question. That which the air is to architecture, religion is to politics. It is the vital air of every question. Directly, it determines nothing—indirectly, it conditions every problem that can arise. The kingdoms of this world must become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. How—if His Spirit is not to mingle with political and social truths? (*F. W. Robertson.*) *No division of allegiance*:—Our Lord here recognizes no division of allegiance. He does not regard man as under two masters—as owing duty to Cæsar and duty to God. Is there a trace in all His other teaching that He contemplated such a division? Did ever a word fall from Him to indicate that He looked upon some obligations as secular and others as sacred? No; God is set forth by Him always and everywhere as the sole Lord of man's being and powers. Nothing man has can be Cæsar's in contradiction to that which is God's. Christ claims all for the Sovereign Master. Body, soul, and spirit, riches, knowledge, influence, love—all belong to Him; there is but one empire, one service, one king; and life, with all its complexity of interest, is simple—simple as the Infinite God who has given it. Rightly understood, therefore, the great precepts of the text are in perfect accord with the doctrine of God's sole and supreme lordship over every thought, and faculty, and possession of man. "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's."

Why? Who enacts it? Who has the right to require it? The answer is—"God." It is a part of your religious obedience to be a loyal citizen. Within the sphere that belongs to him Cæsar claims your service as the ordained representative and minister of God. Civil obedience is an ordinance of the Church; civil society is the creation of God Himself. It is He who, through the earthly ruler, demands your tribute. The result, the order, and the progress of society are His work; and thus the principle of all duty is ultimately one. The inclusion of the lower obedience in the higher has been well illustrated from the world of nature. The moon, we know, has its own relation to the earth; but both have a common relation to the sun. The moon's orbit is included in the earth's orbit, but the sun sways and balances both of them; and there is not a movement of the moon in obeying the inferior earthly attraction, which is not also an act of obedience to the superior spheres. And just so, God has bound up together our relation to "the powers that be" in this world, with our relation to Himself. He has set us under rulers and in societies as a kind of interior province of His mighty kingdom, but our loyalty as subjects and our duty as citizens are but a part of the one supreme duty which we owe to Him. (*Canon Duckworth.*) *Secular and religious duties not in conflict*:—I. Our secular and spiritual relations are co-existent and co-relative in fact. II. The obligations which arise from each are to be recognized equitably, and the respective duties performed faithfully. III. They ought not to be in conflict, but mutually helpful. Both are of God, and with Him are no discords. IV. Application of the principle to—1. Secular business, society, politics, &c. 2. Soul culture, worship, Christian work. (*Anon.*)

Vers. 27-38. There were, therefore, seven brethren.—*The world to come*:—I. THAT THERE IS ANOTHER WORLD. Our Lord calls it *that world*. It is evidently opposed to "this world" (ver. 34); "the children of this world." We know a little of this world. Oh that we knew it aright! Oh that we saw it with the eyes of faith! The world of which we speak is a world of light, and purity, and joy. There is "no night there" (Rev. xxi. 25). Hell is eternal darkness; heaven is eternal light. No ignorance, no errors, no mistakes; but the knowledge of God in Christ begun on earth is there completed; for we shall know even as we are known (1 Cor. xiii. 12). II. IT WILL BE A GREAT MATTER TO OBTAIN THAT WORLD. Notice our Saviour's words, "they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world." Oh, it will be a great matter to obtain that world! It will be a matter of amazing grace and favour. And oh, what a matter of infinite joy will it be! III. SOME KIND OF WORTHINESS IS NECESSARY TO THE OBTAINING OF THAT WORLD. "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world." This worthiness includes merit and meetness; or, a title to glory, and a fitness for it. Both these are necessary. But where shall we look for merit? Not in man. IV. THE RELATIONS OF THE PRESENT WORLD WILL NOT SUBSIST IN THE WORLD TO COME. Our Lord says, "They neither marry, nor are given in marriage." This expression is not intended to disparage that kind of union; for marriage was ordained by God Himself, while yet our first parents retained their original innocence. But in heaven this relation will cease, because the purposes for which it was instituted will also cease. Nor shall the glorified need the aid of that domestic friendship and comfort which result from the married state, and which are well suited to our embodied condition; for even in paradise the Creator judged it was not "good for man to be alone" (Gen. ii. 18). But in heaven there will be no occasion for the lesser streams of happiness, when believers have arrived at the fountain. Oh, let us learn from hence to sit loose to all creature comforts. V. IN THAT WORLD DEATH WILL BE FOR EVER ABOLISHED. This is a dying world. VI. THE BLESSED INHABITANTS OF THAT WORLD SHALL BE LIKE THE ANGELS. "They are equal unto the angels." VII. THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY WILL PERFECT THE BLISS OF GOD'S PEOPLE. "They are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection; they shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead." (*G. Burder.*) *Lessons*:—Creatures on the brink of the grave should not forget it, nor refuse to look into it. 1. Be reminded that we have persons resembling the Sadducees in our own times. There are some who seek to subvert the leading truths of religion; and the method they pursue is very like that followed by the Sadducees of old. They rarely make the attack openly, like honest and generous assailants; but they start difficulties, and endeavour to involve the subjects of inquiry in inextricable perplexity. 2. Let us be suitably affected by the doctrines of immortality and the resurrection here taught. 3. Once more, let us improve this passage in reference to the

endearing relations of life. We are here reminded that death is coming to break them all up, and that short is the time we are to sustain them. Far be it from us to regard them with indifference. Religion requires us to fulfil their duties with all affection and faithfulness. Yet, they are of very limited duration, and very little value, in comparison with eternity. (*Jas. Foote, M.A.*) *The Sadducees*

silenced:—I. GIVE SOME ACCOUNT OF THE SADDUCEES:—A small number of men of rank and affluence, who had shaken off such opinions and practices as they deemed a restraint upon their pleasures. They acknowledged the truth of the Pentateuch, but rejected the tradition of the elders. They also denied a future state, and believed that the soul dies with the body. II. CONSIDER THE ARGUMENT

OF THE SADDUCEES. III. CONSIDER HOW JESUS CHRIST ACTED ON THIS OCCASION. 1. He removed the difficulty which had puzzled the Sadducees. They had not studied the Scriptures with sufficient attention, and a sincere desire of understanding their meaning. If they had done so, they could not have doubted of a future state. If, again, they had reflected on the power of God, they would have concluded that what might appear difficult or impossible to man, is possible and of easy accomplishment with God. He then explained the difficulty. It is to be observed, however, that He speaks only of the righteous. On this subject our Saviour reveals two important truths,—First, that the righteous never die; and, secondly, that they become like the angels. 2. Our Saviour, then, having removed the difficulty which had embarrassed the Sadducees, and having at the same time communicated new and important information concerning the world of spirits, next proceeded to prove from Scripture the certainty of a future state. He argued from a passage in the Book of Exodus, where God is represented as speaking from the burning bush to Moses, and saying, "I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob" (Exod. iii. 6). It is here particularly to be observed, that the force of our Saviour's argument rests upon the words, *I am the God*. Had the words been *I was* the God, the argument would be destroyed.

IV. ATTEND TO THE INFERENCES WHICH WE MAY JUSTLY DRAW FROM THIS SUBJECT. 1. A difficulty arising from our ignorance is not sufficient to disprove or weaken direct or positive evidence. 2. Although a future state is not clearly revealed in the Books of Moses, yet it is presupposed, for the passage here selected can be explained only on the assurance that there is such a state. 3. From our Saviour's declaration here, we also obtain the important information, that the righteous, after their removal from this world by death, do not sink into a state of sleep or insensibility; for the passage which He quotes implies that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, after death, remained alive, and still continued to acknowledge and serve God; for all these things are included in what our Saviour says. Now, the inference we draw is, that what is true respecting the patriarchs we may safely extend to all good men, that they are all in a similar situation. 4. While informed by our Saviour, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, that immediately after death angels are employed to conduct the spirits of the righteous to paradise, we are also assured here by the same authority, that they shall be made like to the angels. When to these we add the passage quoted above, from the Epistle to the Hebrews, respecting the office of angels, it appears necessarily to follow that the righteous shall be elevated in rank and situation; for they shall associate with celestial beings, and consequently will receive all the benefits which can arise from society so pure and exalted. Nor can we help believing that while thus mingled with angels they will be engaged in similar duties and employments. (*J. Thomson, D.D.*) *The world*

to come:—I. THAT THERE IS ANOTHER STATE OF BEING BESIDE AND BEYOND THE PRESENT STATE. None can deny the importance of the question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" 1. The traditions of universal belief. It is said that there is not, perhaps, a people on the face of the earth which does not hold the opinion, in some form or other, that there is a country beyond the grave, where the weary are at rest. Yet this universality of belief is no proof; it is but a mere presumption at best. 2. Certain transformations which take place in nature around us. Such as that of the butterfly from the grave of the chrysalis, and spring from the grave of winter. Such analogies, however, although appropriate as illustrations, are radically defective as proofs. The chrysalis only *seemed* dead; the plants and trees only *seemed* to have lost their vitality. 3. There is, again, the dignity of man. But while much may be said on one side of this question, not a little can be said on the other. "Talk as you will," it has been said, "of the grandeur of man—why should it not be honour enough for him to have his seventy years' life-rent of God's universe?" 4. It is by the gospel alone that life and immortality have been brought to light.

II. THAT THE FUTURE STATE IN MANY IMPORTANT PARTICULARS IS WIDELY DIFFERENT FROM THE PRESENT STATE. They differ—1. In their constitution. "The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage;" but there will be nothing of this kind in heaven. The institution of marriage is intended to accomplish two great objects. (1) the propagation of mankind. But in that world the number of the redeemed family will be complete, and hence marrying and giving in marriage will be done away. (2) Mutual help and sympathy. 2. In the blessedness enjoyed. (1) Negative. "Neither can they die any more." (2) Positive. "They shall be equal unto the angels"—in nature, immortality, purity, knowledge, happiness. It is further added, that they will be "the children of God, being children of the resurrection." To the blessing of adoption several gradations appertain. What is spoken of here is the highest. The apostle refers to it in those striking words, "Because the creature itself shall be delivered," &c. (Rom. viii. 21-23). **III. THAT BEFORE THIS GLORIOUS STATE CAN BE ENTERED UPON, CERTAIN PRE-REQUISITES ARE INDISPENSABLY REQUIRED.** None can attain the world but those which shall be accounted worthy. Two things may be here noticed. 1. Our guilty persons must be accepted. That can only be done through the Lord Jesus—winning Christ, and being found in Him, not having on our own righteousness. 2. Our sinful nature must be renewed. Worthiness and meetness are often used as synonymous terms. Thus we read in one place, "Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance"; in another, "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance." So with the worthiness in the passage before us; it is to be understood as indicating meetness for the heavenly inheritance. Now, nothing that defileth can enter there. Holiness of heart and life is an essential qualification. The pure alone shall see God. (*Expository Outlines.*) *Mercy weaves the veil of secrecy over the future:*—Once, we have somewhere read, there was a gallant ship whose crew forgot their duties on board by the distant vision of their native hills. Many long years had passed over them since they had left their fatherland. As soon as one of their number caught, from the top mast, the first glance of his home-scenes, he raised a shout, "Yonder it is! yonder it is!" That shout shot like electricity through every heart on board, all sought to catch the same glance, some climbed the masts, others took the telescope, every eye was on it, and every heart went forth with the eye; every spirit was flooded with old memories and bounded with new hopes. All thoughts of the vessel on which they stood, and which was struggling with the billows, were gone; they were lost in the strange and strong excitement. The vessel might have sprung a leak, run on shore, or sunk to the bottom for ought they thought about her. The idea of home filled and stirred their natures; the thought of the land in which their fathers lived and perhaps their mothers slept; the land of their childhood, and the land of a thousand associations so swallowed up every other thought, that their present duties were utterly neglected. Somewhat thus, perhaps, it would be with us, were the particulars of the heavenly world made clear and palpable to our hearts. The veil of secrecy drawn over them is woven by the hand of mercy. (*D. Thomas, D.D.*) *Reticence of the Bible in regard to heavenly happiness:*—Casper Hauser was shut up in a narrow, dimly-lighted chamber when a little child. He grew to manhood there. He never saw the earth or the sky. He knew nothing about flowers or stars, mountains or plains, forests or streams. If one had gone to him and tried to tell him of these things, of the life of men in city or country, of the occupations of men in shop or field, the effort would have been a failure. No words could have conveyed to him any idea of the world outside of his cell. And we are like him while shut up in these bodies. The spirit must go out of its clay house before it can begin to know anything definite about life in the spirit world. (*Christian Age.*) *Equal unto the angels.—Equality with angels:*—Glorified saints are equal to the angels. **I. IN THEIR DIGNIFIED POSITION.** **II. IN THEIR SUBLIME WORSHIP.** **III. IN THEIR UNDECAYING STRENGTH** (Psa. ciii. 20; Zech. xiii. 8). Like angels, the dead in Christ shall henceforth excel in strength. Weariness and fatigue shall be forever unknown. **IV. IN THEIR MINISTERING SERVICE** (Heb. i. 14). **V. IN LOVING OBEDIENCE.** We read of angels that they "do His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word." **VI. IN THEIR EARNST STUDY OF THE MYSTERY OF REDEEMING LOVE.** Speaking of the Gospel and its priceless privileges and blessings, Peter says, "Which things the angels desire to look into" (chap. i. 12). **VII. IN THE JOYFUL INTEREST WHICH THEY FEEL IN THE SALVATION OF SINNERS.** **VIII. IN THEIR IMMORTAL YOUTH.** Angels grow not old, as men on earth do. They wear no traces of age; revolving years tell not on them. (*P. Morrison.*) *Equality of men with angels:*—**1. MEN ARE CAPABLE OF BEING MADE EQUAL TO THE ANGELS.** That man is capable

of equalling the angels in the duration of their existence, may be very easily shown. Originally he was, like them, immortal. But what man once possessed, he must still be capable of possessing. Equally easy is it to show that man is capable of being made equal to the angels in moral excellence. The moral excellence of creatures, whether human or angelic, consists in their conformity to the law of God. Originally he was perfectly holy; for God made man upright, in His own image, and this image consisted, as inspiration informs us, in righteousness and true holiness. Man is then capable of being made equal to the angels in moral excellence. Man is also capable of being raised to an intellectual equality with the angels, or being made equal to them in wisdom and knowledge. The image of God in which he was created, included knowledge, as well as righteousness and true holiness. He was, as inspiration informs us, but little lower than the angels. But this small intellectual inferiority, on the part of man, may be satisfactorily accounted for, without supposing that his intellectual faculties are essentially inferior to those of angels, or that his mind is incapable of expanding to the full dimensions of angelic intelligence. It may be accounted for by difference of situation, and of advantages for intellectual improvement. Man was placed on the earth, which is God's footstool. But angels were placed in heaven, which is His throne, His palace, and the peculiar habitation of His holiness and glory. They were thus enabled to approach much nearer, than could earth-born man, to the great Father of lights; and their minds were, in consequence, illuminated with far more than a double portion of that Divine, all-disclosing radiance which diffuses itself around Him. If the mind of an infant can expand, during the lapse of a few years, to the dimensions of a Newton's mind, notwithstanding all the unfavourable circumstances in which it is here placed, why may it not, during an eternal residence in heaven, with the omniscient, all-wise God for its teacher, expand so far as to embrace any finite circle whatever? Little, if any, less reason have we to believe that he is capable of being made equal to them in power. It has been often remarked that knowledge is power; and observation must convince every one that it is so. Man's advances in knowledge have ever been accompanied by a proportionate increase of power. A knowledge of metals gave him power to subdue the earth. But we have already seen that man is capable of being made equal to the angels in knowledge. Again, man is capable of being raised to an equality with the angels in glory, honour, and felicity. The glory of a creature must consist principally in the intellectual and moral excellences with which he is endued; and we have already seen that in these respects man is capable of being made equal to the angels.

II. THAT IN THE FUTURE WORLD, GOOD MEN SHALL BE MADE EQUAL TO THEM IN EACH OF THESE PARTICULARS. The fact that men are capable of being made equal to the angels, goes far to prove the truth of this proposition. From the appearance of Moses and Elijah on the mount of transfiguration, it seems evident that they possessed power of various kinds, of which we are destitute. They had power to descend from the mansions of the blessed, and to return, and also, as it should seem, to render themselves visible or invisible, at their pleasure. Indeed it is certain, that in some respects at least, the powers of the righteous must be greatly increased, or they would be unable to sustain that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, and honour, and felicity, which is reserved for them in the future world. There is a dreadful counterpart to this truth, which, though not mentioned in our text, must be briefly noticed. Every argument, which proves that good men are capable of being made equal to the holy angels, may justly be considered as proving, with equal clearness, that wicked men are capable of equalling the fallen angels, who kept not their first estate. (*E. Payson, D.D.*)

*In the resurrection saints are as angels:—***I. IN HEAVEN THE SAINTS ARE HOLY AS THE ANGELS ARE HOLY. II. IN HEAVEN THE SAINTS, LIKE THE ANGELS, SHALL ENGAGE IN BECOMING ACTS AND EXERCISES.** 1. I say acts and exercises, for while heaven is to be a place of rest, it is not to be a place of idleness. In heaven the saints are to be as angels, and angels, we know, are active in the service of God. 2. In particular, the saints, like the angels, engage in singing the praises of God. 3. Further, the saints, like the angels, are engaged in contemplating the works of God, and especially His wonders in providence and redemption. 4. Yet further, in heaven the saints, like the angels, are engaged in works of love. The angels, we have seen, are actively employed in the service of God. The whole method of the Divine procedure, so far as it comes under our view, seems to be carried on by a system of means or instruments. God fulfils His purposes by agents employed by Him who are blessed themselves and

conveying blessings to others, who are happy and diffusing happiness. Even in inanimate creation on earth we find that nothing is useless; everything has a purpose to serve: the stone, the plant, the animal, every part of the plant and animal has a purpose to serve; it may be an end in itself, but it is also a means towards another end. The ear aids the eye, and the touch aids the ear and eye, and every member aids every other; it is good in itself, and is doing good to others. But these inanimate objects perform their work unknowingly, unconsciously. It is different with angels and the spirits of just men made perfect. They perform their allotted work knowing what they are doing, and blessed in the doing of it. Modern science shows us how much material agency can do. Take, as an example, the electric telegraph, which is every day carrying messages past your place. A methodical action is performed at one end of a wire, and in a few moments an intelligent communication is given at the other end, hundreds of miles away. It is a proof of the capacity of body. We know that our Lord's body after His resurrection appeared and disappeared, and acted no one could tell how. But in the resurrection our bodies will be like His, spiritual and celestial. They will therefore be fit ministers to the perfected spirit—not, as here, hindrances at times, but always helps, and ready to fulfil the will of the spirit. (*J. McCosh, D.D.*)

The mortal and the immortal:—Ours is a dying world, and immortality has no place upon this earth. That which is deathless is beyond these hills. Mortality is here; immortality is yonder! Mortality is below; immortality is above. "Neither can they die any more," is the prediction of something future, not the announcement of anything either present or past. At every moment one of the sons of Adam passes from this life. And each swing of the pendulum is the death-warrant of some child of time. "Death," "death," is the sound of its dismal vibration. "Death," "death," it says, unceasingly, as it oscillates to and fro. The gate of death stands ever open, as if it had neither looks nor bars. The river of death flows sullenly past our dwellings, and continually we hear the splash and the cry of one, and another, and another, as they are flung into the rushing torrent, and carried down to the sea of eternity. If, then, we would get beyond death's circle and shadow, we must look above. Death is here, but life is yonder! Corruption is here, incorruption is yonder. The fading is here, the blooming is yonder. Blessed words are these: "Neither can they die any more." It is not simply, Neither *shall* they die any more, but neither *can* they die any more. Death, which is now a law, an inevitable necessity, shall then be an impossibility. Blessed impossibility! Neither can they die any more! They are clothed with the immortality of the Son of God; for as the Head is immortal, so shall the members be. Ah, this is victory over death! This is the triumph of life! It is more than resurrection; for it is resurrection, with the security that death can never again approach them throughout eternity. All things connected with that new resurrection-state shall be immortal, too. Their inheritance is unfading. Their city, the new Jerusalem, shall never crumble down. Their paradise is as much beyond the power of decay as it is beyond the reach of a second serpent-tempter. Their crowns are all imperishable; and the white raiment in which they shine shall never need cleansing or renewal. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*)

Moses showed at the bush.—*The living God of living men*:—God is the God of ALL MEN, HOWEVER DIFFERENT FROM EACH OTHER THEY MAY BE. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to name three men so closely related to each other, and yet so conspicuously different from each other, as were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Abraham is of the grandest heroic type—heroic in thought, in action, and, above all, in that faith which is the inspiration both of the highest thinking and of the noblest forms of conduct. But what a falling off is there in Isaac! He hardly seems his father's son. Quiet, thoughtful, a lover of ease and good fare, with no genius for action, his very wife chosen for him as if he were incompetent even to marry himself, unable to rule his own household, unable even to die—it would almost seem, when his time was come, that he fades out of history years before he slips his mortal coil. Jacob, again, strikes one as unlike both his father and his grandfather. We think of him as timid, selfish, crafty, unscrupulous, with none of the innocence of Isaac, little or none of the splendid courage and generosity of Abraham. What I want you to mark, then, is the grace of God in calling Himself, as He did for more than a thousand years by the mouth of His servants the prophets, the God of each and all of these three men. Different as they were from each other, they are all dear to Him. He has room enough in His heart for them all. Rightly viewed, then, there is hope for us and for

all men in this familiar phrase. If God is not ashamed to call Himself their God, may He not, will He not, be our God too, and train us as He trained them, till all that is weak and selfish and subtle in us is chastened out of us, and we recover the image in which He created us? II. GOD OUR FATHER WILL NEVER LET HIS CHILDREN DIE. The text our Lord quoted was this: To Moses at the bush—between four and five hundred years, that is, after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were dead—Jehovah had said, “I am,”—not I was—“the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob.” But how could He still be the God of these men if they had long been extinct? He is not the God of dead men, but of living men. The three patriarchs were very certainly not living in this world when God spoke to Moses. They must, therefore, have been living in some other world. Dead to men, they must have been alive unto God. Obviously, then, men do not all die when they die. 1. Because our Lord saw in God the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, He inferred that these men could not die; that even when they did die, they must have lived on unto God. And that after all is, I suppose, the argument or conviction on which we all really base our hope of immortality. “Art Thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die.” The eternity of God implies the immortality of man. 2. But our Lord at least reminds us by His words of another ground for hope. Nature has many symbols which speak of a life capable of passing through death, a life which grows in volume, in power, in beauty, by its submission to death. Every spring we behold the annual miracle by which the natural world is renewed into a richer, lovelier life. Year by year it emerges from its wintry tomb into the fuller and more fruitful life of summer. We may not care to base any very weighty arguments on these delicate and evanescent yet continually-recurring symbols; but, nevertheless, they speak to our imagination and our hearts with a force and a winning persuasiveness beyond that of logic. III. What is to hinder us from arguing that, if God is still their God, and they still live unto Him, then GOD MUST EVEN NOW BE CARRYING ON THE DISCIPLINE AND TRAINING WHICH HE COMMENCED UPON THEM HERE, and carrying it on to still larger and happier issues? If they live, and live unto God, must they not be moving into a closer fellowship with Him, rising to a more hearty adoption of His will, a fuller participation of His righteousness and love? No one of you will question the validity of such an argument as that, I think. You will all gladly admit that, since he still lives, Abraham must by this time be a far greater and nobler man than he was when he left the earth, and must be engaged in far nobler discoveries and enterprises.

*Christ's answer to the Sadducees:—*I. WE WILL CONSIDER IT AS AN ARGUMENT AD HOMINEM, AND SHew THE FITNESS AND FORCE OF IT TO CONVINCE THOSE WITH WHOM OUR SAVIOUR DISPUTED. 1. We will consider what our Saviour intended directly and immediately to prove by this argument. And that was this, That there is another state after this life, wherein men shall be happy or miserable according as they have lived in this world. And this doth not only suppose the immortality of the soul, but forasmuch as the body is an essential part of man, doth, by consequence, infer the resurrection of the body; because, otherwise, the man would not be happy or miserable in another world. 2. The force of this argument, against those with whom our Saviour disputed, will further appear, if we consider the great veneration which the Jews in general had for the writings of Moses above any other books of the Old Testament, which they (especially the Sadducees) looked upon only as explications and comments upon the law of Moses; but they esteemed nothing as a necessary article of faith, which had not some foundation in the writings of Moses. And this seems to me to be the true reason why our Saviour chose to confute them out of Moses, rather than any other part of the Old Testament. 3. If we consider further the peculiar notion which the Jews had concerning the use of this phrase or expression, of God's being any one's God. And that was this: that God is nowhere in Scripture said to be any one's God while he was alive. And, therefore, they tell us, that while Isaac lived, God is not called the God of Isaac, but the “fear of Isaac.” I will not warrant this observation to be good, because I certainly know it is not true. For God doth expressly call Himself “the God of Isaac,” while Isaac was yet alive (Gen. xxviii. 10): “I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac.” It is sufficient to my purpose that this was a notion anciently current among the Jews. And therefore our Saviour's argument from this expression must be so much the stronger against them: for if the souls of men be extinguished by death (as the Sadducees believed) what did it signify to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to have God called their God,

after they were dead? 4. The great respect which the Jews had for these three fathers of their nation, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They, who had so superstitious a veneration for them, would easily believe anything of privilege to belong to them: so that our Saviour doth with great advantage instance in them, in favour of whom they would be inclined to extend the meaning of any promise to the utmost, and allow it to signify as much as the words could possibly bear. So that it is no wonder that the text tells us, that this argument put the Sadducees to silence. They durst not attempt a thing so odious, as to go about to take away anything of privilege from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. II. ENQUIRE WHETHER IT BE MORE THAN AN ARGUMENT AD HOMINEM. The following considerations would appear to indicate that our Lord really meant the matter to be regarded as settled fact. 1. If we consider that for God to be any one's God doth signify some very extraordinary blessing and happiness to those persons of whom this is said. It is a big word for God to declare Himself to be any one's God; and the least we can imagine to be meant by it, is that God will, in an extraordinary manner, employ His power and wisdom to do him good: that He will concern Himself more for the happiness of those whose God He declares Himself to be, than for others. 2. If we consider the eminent faith and obedience of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Abraham left his country in obedience to God, not knowing whither he was to go. And, which is one of the most unparalleled and strange instances of faith and obedience that can be almost imagined, he was willing to have sacrificed his only son at the command of God. Isaac and Jacob were also very good men, and devout worshippers of the true God, when almost the whole world was sunk into idolatry and all manner of impiety. Now what can we imagine, but that the good God did design some extraordinary reward to such faithful servants of His? especially if we consider, that He intended this gracious declaration of His concerning them, for a standing encouragement to all those who, in after ages, should follow the faith, and tread in the steps of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 3. If we consider the condition of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in this world. The Scripture tells us, that "they were pilgrims and strangers upon the earth," had no fixed and settled habitation, but were forced to wander from one kingdom and country to another; that they were exposed to many hazards and difficulties, to great troubles and afflictions in this world; so that there was no such peculiar happiness befel them, in this life, above the common rate of men, as may seem to fill up the big words of this promise, that God would be their God. 4. Then, we will consider the general importance of this promise, abstracting from the particular persons specified and named in it, viz., Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and that is, that God will make a wide and plain difference between good and bad men; He will be so the God of good men as He is not of the wicked: and some time or other put every good man into a better and happier condition than any wicked man: so that the general importance of this promise is finally resolved into the equity and justice of the Divine Providence. And now having, I hope, sufficiently cleared this matter, I shall make some improvement of this doctrine of a future state, and that to these three purposes. 1. To raise our minds above this world, and the enjoyments of this present life. 2. The consideration of another life should quicken our preparation for that blessed state which remains for us in the other world. 3. Let the consideration of that unspeakable reward which God hath promised to good men at the resurrection, encourage us to obedience and a holy life. We serve a great Prince who is able to promote us to honour; a most gracious Master who will not let the least service we do for Him pass unrewarded. This is the inference which the apostle makes from his large discourse of the doctrine of the resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 58). Nothing will make death more welcome to us, than a constant course of service and obedience to God. "Sleep (saith Solomon) is sweet to the labouring man": so after a great diligence and industry in "working out our own salvation," and (as it is said of David) "serving our generation according to the will of God," how pleasant will it be to fall asleep! And, as an useful and well-spent life will make our death to be sweet, so our resurrection to be glorious. (Archbishop Tillotson.) *Resurrection: an Easter-day Sermon*:—In the words of the text, the ground on which our Blessed Lord declares the resurrection of men to rest, is well worthy of our deepest attention. He does not say that because He Himself was ere long to be crucified and to rise again, therefore mankind should also rise. He goes down even deeper than this, to the very root of all hope and life for man; to that on which His own incarnation and death and resurrection rest; to the very foundation of being—even the nature of God Himself. Because

God is God; the living and unchangeable God; because He has called us into existence, and made us what we are; because He has revealed Himself as our God; and taken us into covenant with Himself, therefore, man shall not—man cannot,—perish. But there is another most blessed and comforting truth taught us in the text; without which resurrection would cease to be a blessing, would lose all power to console and strengthen, would become a dark and dismal phantom. God is the God,—not of solitary and separate souls,—but the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob; the God of father and son and grandson; the God who has appointed and preserves the order of human society, upholds its relationships, and will not disappoint the pure and sweet affections which have been nurtured in them. Would Abraham be the same Abraham if there were no Isaac; Isaac, the same Isaac, if there were no Abraham and Jacob? Nay, if the dishonour of forgetfulness were, in the life beyond the grave, thrown on the human loves and affections which have been born on earth, would God be the same God? (*J. N. Bennie, LL.B.*)

Vers. 41–44. How say they that Christ is David's son?—*David, Christ's ancestor* :—“How say they that Christ is David's son?” Reading David's history, we might exclaim, “How, indeed!” Son of David, Son of God: is not this like son of sin, son of grace? But if in the ancestor sin abounded, in the descendant grace much more abounded; and wisdom will inquire whether there is any relation between the superabounding grace and the abounding sin. We may think of Christ as a spiritual David, and we may think of David as a natural Christ, in this way: we may suppose a nature like Christ's, but without what we know He possessed—a governing, harmonizing spirit of holiness. Imagine that. Imagine one whose natural endowments resembled Christ's, but without the presiding spirit of holiness; then, we say, you would have another variety of David's life—one more distinguished by nobleness, but one marked and saddened with many an act of dishonour. On the other hand, if you suppose David to become perfectly spiritual, to have that presiding holiness which Christ had; amongst all the ancient saints, there would have been none so like the Lord Jesus Christ, though still less than He. And thus it is that we have in David the nature of Christ, but without the Divine harmonic regulation; and we have in Christ the nature of David, but not now with the fleshly irregularities, not sullied by blots, not made the shame as well as in part the glory of Israel, but utterly free from evil. Christ is, then, considered as David's descendant, the inheritor of his sensibilities, which shine in our Lord with completest lustre. He is also the inheritor of his contests; and our Lord overcomes with unvaried and complete victory those temptations which assaulted His ancestor. And by being at once the possessor of his sensibilities and the inheritor of his contests, He becomes the expiation of his sins. You will often find in the history of families that troubles accumulate, and as it were ripen, until they are “laid upon” some one individual; that on this individual rests the burden of evil which has been slowly accumulating. Now, you may have a case in which it seems that the burden of evil so rests that the man is borne down, crushed, and destroyed; and here you say, through the wickedness of his House, this, the last descendant, is utterly shaken and ruined. But you may also have a successful fight; the burden is on the back, but the strength is in the man. This is at once the most burdened and most powerful individual sprung from the race. It is he who, grappling with the evil in its fullest strength, shall retrieve the fortunes of the family. There are histic cases which illustrate that principle. In every family history evil goes on worsening, or good goes on strengthening; and we may have instances of men borne down by the evil, and other instances of men oppressed very greatly and yet triumphing, and so retrieving honour and fortune. Now our Lord Jesus Christ was a spiritual David; He shares—possesses, indeed, to the full—David's sensibilities; He engages in the moral contests in which David so often failed; and He becomes the expiation of David's sins—that is to say, He utterly annuls that power of sin so manifest and hateful in David, and brings in a strength of holiness which, as gradually diffused in the breasts of men, shall cause the instrument that else would be discordant to be a harp of joy—shall refine from earthly alloys that sacred metal which, as God's gold, he will work up into the ornaments and harps of heaven. (*T. T. Lynch.*)

Vers. 45–47. Beware of the scribes.—*The sins of the scribes and Pharisees* :—The scribes were doctors of the law, who read and expounded the Scripture

to the people. They were possessed of the key of knowledge, and occupied the seat of Moses. The Pharisees were a kind of separatists among the Jews, as their name indeed denotes. When Jesus speaks to these men, He no longer wears His wonted aspect. His language is not that of compassion and tenderness, but of stern denunciation. It is important that Jesus should be presented to us under these two aspects, of forgiving mercy and of relentless wrath, in order to stimulate hope and to repress presumption. In the text Jesus proceeds to indicate the grounds of that woe He had denounced upon the scribes and Pharisees. He points out to the people the crimes with which they were chargeable, and the hypocrisy of their conduct. It is worthy of notice that He does not content Himself with speaking to the guilty parties alone. He unveils their character before the face of the world. They were deceiving the people by their pretences, and therefore the people must be warned against them. The same thing is true of all pretenders in religion. Truth and justice, and love for the souls of men, alike demand that such pretences should be made manifest. The first charge adduced against the scribes and Pharisees in the text is, that they shut up the kingdom of heaven against men—that they neither entered into it themselves, nor suffered those who were entering to go in. When the question is put, what methods did they take to accomplish this? the easiest and perhaps the most natural answer would be, that it was by their extraordinary strictness and outward purity. The mass of the people were regarded by them as little better than heathens. They abjured the society of such men; and one special ground of offence against Jesus was, that He did not imitate them in this respect. It might be readily presumed, then, that by such austerities as marked their outward conduct, they rendered religion altogether so repulsive as to deter the common people from inquiring into its claims, rather than to invite them to submit themselves to its authority. Thus, it may be supposed, they shut up the kingdom of heaven against men. It is notorious that such an accusation as this has been always preferred against the pure ministers of a pure religion. The duty of the minister is to declare the truth as he finds it in the Bible, and to act upon the directions he has there received. In thus preaching and acting, however, many may be shut out from the kingdom of heaven; it is not he who has closed its gates against them, but God Himself. But the supposition is very far from being correct, that the Pharisees were accused of shutting the kingdom of heaven against men by the strictness and austerity to which they pretended. We shall discover the real grounds of the accusation by comparing the text with the parallel passage in the Gospel according to Luke. It is there said (Luke xi. 52): "Woe unto you lawyers, for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye enter not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered." The way, then, in which they shut the kingdom of heaven against themselves and others, was by taking away the key of knowledge. In order to this, let us endeavour to ascertain the precise position of the Pharisee, and the place which he assigned to the word of God. Let us observe how he used the key of knowledge, and by what precise instrumentality he shut up the kingdom of heaven against men. The Pharisees did not deny men the use of the Bible. They did not conceal the knowledge of its contents. The people heard it read from year to year in their synagogues. It was explained to them, and their attention solicited to its truths. How, then, could it be said that they had taken away the key of knowledge? The answer to the question is to be found in the fact, not that they withheld the word of God, but that they made the commandment of God of none effect by their tradition. They refused to acknowledge the fact that God is the only teacher and director of His Church. They added to His word instructions of their own. The Divine authority, if it is to be preserved at all, must stand apart from and be superior to all other authority. The claims of God are paramount, and so soon as they cease to be so, they cease to be Divine. In other words, God is no longer God—His worship is rendered vain—and His commandments become of none effect. Thus the key of knowledge is altogether taken away, and the kingdom of heaven is shut against men. The fact that the commandments of men occupied such a place at all vitiated their whole doctrine and worship, deprived men of the key of knowledge, and shut up the kingdom of heaven against them. Such a Church ceased to be a blessing, and had become a curse to the nation. It was a Church not to be reformed, but to be destroyed. It was rotten at the very heart, and nothing remained for it but woe. But the text is pregnant with instruction and admonition to all the professed disciples of Christ. It impresses upon us the doctrine that the kingdom of heaven is opened by knowledge. This is the key that unlocks the celestial gates. We cannot obtain an entrance to

it in any other way. The lock will not yield to any other power. Not that all kinds of knowledge are equally available. This is life eternal, to know God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. To be ignorant of Christ is to be shut out of heaven. To know Jesus Christ is to open up the kingdom of heaven. The highest gifts, the most shining acquirements, cannot bring us a footstep nearer heaven. Nothing else avails to open up the kingdom to men but the knowledge of Jesus Christ. From the text also we learn this doctrine, that the ministers of the Church have in a certain sense the power of shutting up the kingdom of heaven against men. They are set up as lights of the world. Their business is to instruct the ignorant. If they neglect the duties or pervert the designs of their office, how are men to acquire the knowledge of the truth? From the doctrines set forth in the text, let us lay to heart the following practical instructions: 1. Let us learn to read the Bible, and to listen to its truths, in the assurance that our eternal destiny depends upon the knowledge of them. 2. Let ministers also learn their proper vocation as porters to the kingdom of heaven, and let them beware of handling the Word of God deceitfully. Let us now proceed to examine the second charge which Jesus brings against the scribes and Pharisees. It is conveyed in these words—"Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation." The crime of the Pharisees was not one, but manifold, and Jesus, in faithfulness, accumulates His charges against them. Lest for a moment they should forget the heinous character of these charges, He recapitulates with each the coming doom which awaited them. This second sin which Jesus charges against the Pharisees is of a very aggravated kind. It is devouring the houses of widows. Not contented with making void the commandments of God, these men were guilty of the most hateful practices. Having usurped a treasonable authority in Divine things, their lives were characterized by acts of atrocious oppression and cruelty. Insinuating themselves into the confidence of the weak and the defenceless, they made their high religious profession a covert for the basest covetousness. They become robbers of the widow and the fatherless. Such wickedness of conduct might have been expected as the sure result of the corruptions they had introduced into the Divine worship. Purity of faith is the surest guardian of integrity of life. In the case of the Pharisees the wickedness was peculiarly hateful. The sin of which they were guilty was devouring houses, or, in other words, involving families in ruin, by appropriating and devouring the substance which belonged to them. But this sin was accompanied with a threefold aggravation. First, the houses they involved in ruin were the houses of widows. Secondly, their sin was yet farther aggravated by being committed under the pretext of religion. They committed robbery under the guise of piety. Thirdly, they made an extraordinary profession of religious zeal. They not only prayed with a view to the more easy perpetration of robbery, but their prayers were long. Widows were their easy dupes. Thus we are directed to one of the marks which indicate the mere pretender to godliness, and by which we shall be able to detect and expose the hypocrite. For the pretender in religion, having necessarily some selfish object in view, and not being animated by a love of the truth, may be expected to turn his profession to the best possible account. And whether for the purpose of gratifying his vanity, of acquiring power and influence, or of increasing wealth, he will always find his readiest instruments in silly and restless women. Hence, too readily, among despisers of religion, the reproach has been taken up against the true and living Church, that its most active promoters, and most zealous adherents, are women, and that the prayers of its members are only for a pretence. Surely it would be to infer rashly to conclude, that because the ministers or members of a Church were signalized by fervent and frequent prayer, and because devout and honourable women, not a few, were among its most zealous friends, such a Church was guilty of the Pharisaic crime, and justly lay under the reproach and the woe denounced in the text. Let us examine and see. No one can read the personal history of Jesus without perceiving how, in the days of His earthly ministry, He had among His most honoured and endeared disciples devout women not a few, whose rich gifts He did not despise, and whose devoted love He did not spurn. Who was it that blamed the expenditure of a very precious box of ointment? Is it, on the other hand, an unfailing mark of a hypocrite to make long prayers? Doubtless there have been many, in every age, who have assumed the form of godliness while denying its power, who have drawn near to God with the mouth, and honoured Him with the lips, while their hearts have been far from Him. But if hypocritical pretenders affect this devotion, is it not an

evidence that prayer is the proper and true life of the believer? Why should the Pharisee pretend to it, if the religious propriety of the thing itself were not felt and acknowledged? The hypocrite does not affect that which does not essentially belong to godliness. Jesus did not accuse the Pharisees, and pronounce a woe upon them, because they received the support of women, even of widows, nor because of the frequency or length of their prayers. Abstracted, however, from the peculiar circumstances and aggravations with which the sin was accompanied in the actual practice of the Pharisees, the thing condemned in the text is, prayer which is uttered only in pretence, and prayer which has a selfish and worldly end in view. Widows were the objects against whom the Pharisees put in practice their artful hypocrisy. But it is obvious that whosoever may be the objects of the deception, the essential character of the sin remains the same. Nor is the nature of the sin affected by the extent of the pretended devotion. The pretence is the thing blameworthy. It is true the sin becomes more heinous in proportion to the height of the profession, and the Pharisees are worthy of greater damnation, because they not only pretended to devotion, but to very high flights of it. Leaving out of view, however, such aggravating circumstances as these, that their prayer was long, and that the widows and the fatherless were their prey, we have the essential character of the sin set before us, as at least worthy of damnation, namely, making a profession of religion for the purpose of advancing worldly interests, and securing the ends of earthly ambition. The Pharisees of our day, then, who lie under the woe pronounced by Jesus, are—1. Those ministers who enter upon and continue in their office for a piece of bread. The most pitiable being among all the afflicted sons of humanity is he who has assumed the holy office of the ministry for the sake of worldly ends and objects. 2. But the Pharisaic crime is by no means limited to ministers. Those people are guilty of it, in whatever position they are placed, who, for the sake of good repute, from fear of worldly loss, or from the desire of worldly gain—or who, actuated by any earthly or selfish motive whatever, make profession of a religion which they do not believe. We have yet to examine a third charge which Jesus brings against the scribes and Pharisees. He accompanies the recital of it with a denunciation of the same woe he had already twice invoked upon them. “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.” The apostles of deceit and falsehood have often manifested a zeal in the propagation of their principles which is fitted to minister a severe reproof to those who know and who believe the truth. This does not arise from the circumstance that the apostles of error are possessed of more energy and activity of mind than the friends of truth, but because they have frequently a more hearty interest in the advancement of their cause. Let there be an opening for worldly advancement, and the gratification of worldly ambition, and the way is crowded with rival and eager candidates. There is no remissness of effort among them. The conquests of early Christianity were rapid and wide, because its apostles had strong faith and untiring zeal. From what has been stated, it will be manifest that it is not the fact of making proselytes or converts against which the woe of Christ is denounced. This, on the contrary, is the great duty which He has laid upon all His disciples; and the illustrious reward He hath promised to the work is, that they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. A church is doing nothing if it be not making proselytes. It is a dead trunk ready for the fire. They did not care to make their converts holier and better and happier men. They made them twofold more the children of hell than themselves. It was enough that they assumed the name and made the outward profession. It will be instructive to examine for a little the methods they adopted for preserving their influence, extending their power, and crushing the truth. We will thus be able to understand more perfectly the grounds of the condemnation pronounced against them, and how their zeal should have produced such fruits. 1. In the ninth chapter of the Gospel according to John we find the record of a miraculous work of Jesus, in opening the eyes of a man who had been blind from his birth. The Pharisees became aware that such a miracle had been wrought, and with great propriety made immediate and diligent inquiry into the reality of the fact. The means, then, by which they sought to quench the truth—to induce a denial of the manifest power of God, and to retain the people as their proselytes and followers—were to bring against Jesus the accusation of breaking the law of the land. He who did so, they argued, must be a sinner—he could not come from God, and to follow him would be certain destruction. 2. Throughout the narratives of the

evangelists there are scattered abundant evidences of another instrument of proselytizing employed by the Pharisees. It is the language of reviling and scorn. They ridiculed the poverty of the disciples. Doubtless by such reviling and mockery they might attain a certain measure of success. 3. Another instrument of the Pharisees for making and retaining proselytes, was misrepresentation and calumny. They watched the words of Jesus that they might have something to report to His disadvantage. 4. The Pharisees made converts by force. They took up the weapons of persecution and vigorously employed them. The charge as expressed, pronounces woe against them, because of their great zeal in making proselytes, and because of the lamentable results which followed upon their conversion. (*W. Wilson.*)

CHAPTER XXI.

Vers. 1-4. This poor widow hath cast in more than they all.—*The widow's mites* :—Our Lord wished to see *how* the multitude cast money into the collection-chest—not only *how much*—anybody could have discovered that—but in what manner and spirit it was being done: reverently or irreverently—as unto God or as unto man—so as to display or so as to conceal the offering—with a conscientious aim to give all that was due, or a self-convicted sense that a part thereof was being withheld. The searching eye of the Master struck through the outward demeanour of each passing worshipper, right down to the motive that swayed the hand. He was reading the heart of each giver. He was marking whether the gift was the mere fruit of a devotionless habit—a sheer affectation of religious liberality—or, as it ought to be, a humble and sincere token of gratitude and consecration to God. These were the inquiries that were engaging the mind of our Lord on this memorable occasion. We are not informed how long He had sat or what discoveries He had made before the arrival of the “poor widow,” but He noticed that she gave but two “mites”; and knowing that this was all she had, He discerned the unselfishness and love that prompted an offering which would perhaps be her last oblation on the altar of the Lord. This act of unfeigned devotion touched Him at once, inasmuch that He immediately called His disciples, and drew their attention to so striking and instructive a case. It was *her* gift, rather than any other, that attracted the greatest interest in the courts of heaven. It was *her* offering, rather than any other, that was alone worthy of a permanent record in the Gospel History and the “books of eternal remembrance.” And why? Not only because she gave “all her living,” but because she gave it unto the Lord “with all her heart.” Not at all in a spirit of petulance or desperation, as might have been the case; not at all because she saw want staring her in the face, and thought it no longer worth her while to retain the paltry coins she possessed. On the contrary, it was the fineness of the woman's spirit, the richness of her gratitude and love, the wealth of her self-forgetfulness and trust under the severity of her trials, that gave her little gift the exceeding rareness of its value. She was neither despairing nor repining, but “walking by faith” and in contentment, reflecting that, notwithstanding her indigence, there was none to whom she was so great a debtor as unto the Lord her God, who in His providence had given her all she had, or ever had had, or ever would have, temporal and spiritual. And out of the depths of her adoration and thankfulness she says unto herself, “I will go,” in my poverty and sincerity, “and pay my vows unto the Lord in the presence of all His people,” cast my slender and only offering into the sacred treasury, and await the goodness of His hand in “the land of the living.” The other worshippers were giving variously, but all “of their abundance”; or, as the Revised Version has it, “of their superfluity.” They never missed what they gave. They were sacrificing nothing to enable them to give. They could have given more, some of them far more, and never have felt the slightest pressure in consequence. But the “poor widow” had not an iota more to offer. She gave her “utmost farthing,” and she gave it gladly. (*J. W. Pringle, M.A.*) *The duty of almsgiving* :—1. It is necessary and scriptural that there be public voluntary contributions for pious and charitable purposes. 2. Both the rich and the poor should contribute to pious and charitable purposes, and that according to their respective ability. 3. It concerns us all to

see that our contributions be such, in respect of the principles and motives from which they flow, as will meet with the Divine approbation. 4. Be exhorted to cast liberally into the offerings of God, by the encouraging considerations which are placed before you in His Word. (1) Remember that the eye of the Lord Jesus Christ is upon you. (2) Remember, again, the considerations connected with the amazing kindness of your God and Saviour to you. (3) Be exhorted, once more, to give liberally, by the consideration of the promise of an abundant recompense, both in this world and in the world to come. (*Jas. Foote, M.A.*) *The anonymous widow*.—It is related of Father Taylor, the sailor missionary of Boston, that on one occasion, when a minister was urging that the names of the subscribers to an institution (it was the missionary cause) should be published, in order to increase the funds, and quoted the account of the poor widow and her two mites, to justify this trumpet-sounding, he settled the question by rising from his seat, and asking in his clear, shrill voice, "Will the speaker please give us the name of that poor widow?" (*Christian Age*.) *The widow's mite*.—When it is said that this mite was all this woman's living, it must, of course, mean all her living for that day. She threw herself upon the providence of God to supply her with her evening meal or night's lodging. From what she gave, which the Lord brought to light and commended, the expression "I give my mite" has passed into a proverb, which in the mouths of many who use it is ridiculous, if not profane. What ought to be the mite of one in a good business which yields him several hundreds a year clear profit? What ought to be the mite of a professional man in good practice, after all reasonable family claims are provided for? A man with an income of at least two or three hundred a year once said to me, when I called upon him for assistance in keeping up a national school, "I will think about it, sir, and I will give you my mite." He did think, and his mite was two shillings. Contrast this with the following. Two aged paupers, having only the usual parish pay, became communicants. They determined that they would not neglect the offertory; but how was this to be done, as they were on starvation allowance? Well, during the week before the celebration, they did without light, sat up for two or three hours in the dark, and then went to bed, and gave the few pence which they saved in oil or rushlights to be laid on the altar of God. (*M. F. Sadler*.) *Giving his all*.—A gentleman was walking late one night along a street in London, in which stands the hospital where some of our little friends support a bed ("The May Fair Cot," in Ormond Street Hospital) for a sick child. There were three acrobats passing along there, plodding wearily home to their miserable lodgings after their day's work; two of them were men, and they were carrying the ladders and poles with which they gave their performance in the streets whenever they could collect a crowd to look on. The third was a little boy in a clown's dress. He trotted wearily behind, very tired, and looking pale and sick. Just as they were passing the hospital the little lad's sad face brightened for a moment. He ran up the steps and dropped into the box attached to the door a little bit of paper. It was found next morning there. It contained a sixpence, and on the paper was written, "For a sick child." The one who saw it afterwards ascertained, as he tells us, that the poor little waif, almost destitute, had been sick, and in his weary pilgrimage was a year before brought to the hospital, which had been a "House Beautiful" to him, and he was there cured of his bodily disease. Hands of kindness had ministered to him, words of kindness had been spoken to him, and he had left it cured in body and whole in heart. Some one on that day in a crowd had slipped a sixpence into his hand, and that same night as he passed by, his grateful little heart gave up for other child-sufferers "all the living that he had." It was all done so quietly, so noiselessly; but oh! believe me, the sound of that little coin falling into God's treasury that night rose above the roar and din of this mighty city, and was heard with joy in the very presence of God Himself. *The giving out of abundance and out of penury*.—"Mamma, I thought a mite was a very little thing. What did the Lord mean when He said the widow's mite was more than all the money the rich men gave?" It was Sunday afternoon, and the question was asked by a little child of eight, who had large, dark, inquiring eyes, that were always trying to look into things. Mamma had just been reading to her the story from the Bible, and now she wanted it explained. Mamma thought for a few minutes, and then said, "Well, Lulu, I will tell you a little story, and then I think you will understand why the widow's mite was more valuable than ordinary mites. There was once a little girl, whose name was Kitty, and this little girl had ever so many dolls, almost more than she could count. Some were made of china,

and others were made of wax, with real hair and beautiful eyes that would open and shut; but Kitty was tired of them all, except the newest one, which her auntie had given her at Christmas. One day a poor little girl came to the door begging, and Kitty's mother told her to go and get one of her old dolls and give it away. She did so, and her old doll was like what the rich men put into the treasury. She could give it away just as well as not, and it didn't cost her anything. But the poor little beggar girl was delighted with her doll. She had never had but one before, and that was a rag doll; but this one had such lovely curly hair, and she had never seen any lady with such an elegant pink silk dress on. She was almost afraid to hold it against her dirty shawl, for fear of soiling it; so she hurried home as fast as she could, to hide it away with her few small treasures. Just as she was going upstairs to their poor rooms, she saw through the crack of the door in the basement her little friend Sally, who had been sick in bed all summer, and who was all alone all day, while her mother went out washing, to try and earn money enough to keep them from starving. As our little girl looked through the crack she thought to herself, 'I must show Sally my new dolly.' So she rushed into the room and on to the bed, crying, 'O Sally! see!' Sally tried to reach out her arms to take it, but she was too sick; so her little friend held up the dolly, and as she did so, she thought, 'How sick Sally looks to-day! and she hasn't any dolly.' Then, with one generous impulse, she said, 'Here, Sally, you may have her.' Now, Lulu, do you see? The little girl's dolly was like the widow's mite—she gave her all."

The largest giver:—The late Bishop Selwyn was a man of ready wit as well as of devout Christian feeling. In his New Zealand diocese it was proposed to allot the seats of a new church, when the Bishop asked on what principle the allotment was to be made, to which it was replied that the largest donors should have the best seats, and so on in proportion. To this arrangement, to the surprise of every one, the Bishop assented, and presently the question arose who had given the most. This, it was answered, should be decided by the subscription list. "And now," said the Bishop, "who has given the most? The poor widow in the temple, in casting into the treasury her two mites, had cast in more than they all; for they of their abundance had cast into the treasury, but she had cast in all the living that she had." (*W. Bazendale.*)

A Welsh boy's offering:—It is related of a little Welsh boy who attended a missionary meeting that when he had given in his collecting card and what he had obtained from his friends, he was greatly distressed because he had not a halfpenny of his own to put in the plate at the meeting. His heart was so thrilled with interest in the work that he ran home and told his mother that he wanted to be a missionary, and asked her to give him something for the collection, but she was too poor to give him any money. He was disappointed and cried; but a thought struck him. He collected all his marbles, went out, and sold them for a penny, and then went to the meeting again and put it on the plate, feeling glad that he was able to do something to promote the cause of missions.

What one halfpenny can do:—A son of one of the chiefs of Burdwan was converted by a single tract. He could not read, but he went to Rangoon, a distance of two hundred and fifty miles; a missionary's wife taught him to read, and in forty-eight hours he could read the tract through. He then took a basket full of tracts; with much difficulty preached the gospel at his own home, and was the means of converting hundreds to God. He was a man of influence; the people flocked to hear him; and in one year one thousand five hundred natives were baptized in Arracan as members of the Church. And all this through one little tract! That tract cost one halfpenny! Oh! whose halfpenny was it? God only knows. Perhaps it was the mite of some little girl; perhaps the well-earned offering of some little boy. But what a blessing it was! (*Bowes.*)

The gifts of the poor:—Sarah Hosmer, while a factory girl, gave fifty guineas to support native pastors. When more than sixty years old she longed so to furnish Nestoria with one more preacher that, living in an attic, she took in sewing until she had accomplished her cherished purpose. Dr. Gordon has well said, "In the hands of this consecrated woman, money transformed the factory girl and the seamstress into a missionary of the Cross and then multiplied her sixfold." But might we not give a thousand times as much money as Sarah Hosmer gave, and yet not earn her reward?

The true worth of money:—After all, objects take their colour from the eyes that look at them. And let us be assured that there is an infinite difference in the sight of an eye which is the window of a sordid soul and an eye from which looks a soul that has been ennobled by the royal touch of Christ. There are some eyes that read upon a piece of gold nothing but

the figures that tell its denomination. There are others, thank God, that see upon it truths that thrill and gladden and uplift. If the lust of gold has blinded your eyes to all else but its conventional value, go to the feet of Christ, and to His question, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" answer, "Lord, that mine eyes might be opened." And when you have learned to look through money into that infinite reach that lies beyond it, you will have learned the lesson of the gospel. You may then be a "rich Christian," making earth brighter and better, and building for yourself in heaven "everlasting habitations." *Liberal giving*:—In a sequestered glen in Burmah lived a woman, who was known as Naughapo (Daughter of Goodness). She was the Dorcas of the glen—clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, soothing the afflicted, and often making her little dwelling the home of the poor, that they might enjoy the privilege of the neighbouring school. Mrs. Mason, the missionary, visiting her, was struck with the beauty of her peaceful home—evidently a spot which the Lord had blessed. . . . The day before she left, a pedlar had called with his tempting fabrics for sale; but though this poor woman was in poor garments, she had but one rupee for purchases, while on the following morning she and her family put thirteen rupees into Mrs. Mason's hand, to be deposited in the mission treasury. (*Mrs. Wylie's "Life of Mrs. Mason."*) *Noble giving*:—General Gordon had a great number of medals, for which he cared nothing. There was a gold one, however, given to him by the Empress of China, with a special inscription engraved upon it, for which he had a great liking. But it suddenly disappeared, no one knew when or how. Years afterwards it was found out by a curious accident that he had erased the inscription, sold the medal for ten pounds, and sent the sum anonymously to Canon Millar, for the relief of the sufferers from the cotton famine at Manchester. (*E. Hake.*)

Vers. 5, 6. Adorned with goodly stones and gifts.—*On the object and use of the sanctuary*:—I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH CHRIST UTTERED THESE WORDS. Every attentive reader of Holy Scripture must have remarked this fact, in the history of the Bible, viz., that whenever and wheresoever God revealed His choice of a spot among the sons of men, to "place His Name there"—where He might be especially present with them, to receive their worship, and to bestow on them His blessing—that spot was always directed and made to be as great a contrast, and as much superior as possible to all other places in which men ordinarily abode. But all this, as the same attentive reading of Holy Scripture must also convince us, was immediately directed to its own great and specific objects. It was designed by God to lead their thoughts upward to Himself. The temple had been a great probationary blessing to the Jews; it had been ordained of old by God, for the advancement of their essential and everlasting good; and it was now foredoomed to such ruin and desolation, that "there should not be left in it one stone upon another, which should not be thrown down," only because of the way in which they had abused their privileges, trampled on their mercies, and forgotten the covenant while they walked in the very presence of their God. II. APPLICATION: 1. These words of our Lord give no sort of encouragement to the notion which has often prevailed, and has been much repeated in our days, of its being utterly immaterial what kind of fabric we dedicate to the Most High; that all must be alike to Him, and the meanest sufficiently acceptable in His sight; inasmuch as "He dwelleth not in temples made with hands," and can be as well honoured within walls of clay, as beneath the stateliest roof that ever was raised by man. When men live, according to their respective degrees, in a state which God has prospered—dwelling, if not, like David, in "houses of cedar," at least in those of competence and comfort—it is not for them to suffer the "Ark of God to remain within curtains"; and though to the wanderer in the desert, or the colonist in his new settlement, the best tent or cot he could procure might be meet for the service of his God, yet it is not so for a society of Englishmen, dwelling in the very bosom of their highly favoured country and Church. How far are we using our Redeemer's sanctuary upon earth, in such a manner as that, when this fails, we may be received into "a building of God; a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"? We must not forget the possibility there is that we might be walking in the judicial blindness of Israel, whilst we are possessed of all the light, and all the means of grace, with which the Christian Church is entrusted. (*J. Puckle.*) *Admiration for the outward form rather than for the spiritual meaning*:—Is there any one Christian, however austere, who, on entering the body of our cathedral not for the

first time but the twentieth, and allowing his eye to wander along its avenue of columns, or into the depth at once so mysterious and so impressive, of the distant choir; or towards those arches, at once light and bold, which, like a vigorous vegetation on each pilaster, throw out and intertwine their stems at the centre—is there any one who has not said to himself, How beautiful this is! what harmony! what unison among all these stones! what music in this architecture! what poetry in this edifice! Those who reared it are dead, but though dead they still speak to us; and their conception, full of adoration, their conception, a species of prayer, is so united to their work, that we think we feel it and breathe it as we advance within these walls which carry us over a vista of ages. Such is our feeling; and if we are not alone, we can scarcely help giving it utterance. Thus, doing what the disciples did when they exclaimed, What stones! what buildings! might we not hear ourselves addressed by our Lord in words of reproof, “Is it this you are looking at?” And why should we not be reproved if our soul goes no farther than our eye, if it stops where our eye is obliged to stop; if symbols, appearances, visible things, hold it captive; if the splendours of art chain down our heart to the earth instead of raising it to heaven? This is the censure which Jesus Christ passes on His disciples. He had looked into their souls, and there detected that lust of the flesh, that lust of the eye, and that pride of life, which are the three connecting chains by which the enemy of God links us closely to outer darkness. The man and the Jew were equally revealed in that involuntary exclamation; man, dazzled by whatever is seen, and filled with contempt for what is not seen; the Jew, proud of the exterior pomp of a worship, the deep meaning and internal idea of which had long escaped him, and attaching himself obstinately to the law—in other words, a shadow, at the very moment when this law was more than ever a shadow. Is it this you are looking at? What! these few grains of dust, which are large only because you are little? What! these gifts extorted by fear, vanity, and custom, from individuals who refused to begin by giving themselves to God? What! the gorgeous falsehood of these marbles and gildings, of all those ornaments, the pious import of which has long since been forgotten? Is it this you are looking at? (*A. Vinet, D.D.*) *Looking at the true grandeur of Christianity*:—Christianity has taken a form in the world; it has become visible. Travelling over ages, and propagating itself in the world, it has assumed a place among the things to which the world pays regard; and besides this grandeur of space and duration which procures it a species of respect on the part of the most indifferent, it has, by its intellectual grandeur (I mean by the grandeur of the ideas which it expresses, and those which it suggests), captivated the regard and admiration of thinkers. Thus is it great after the fashion of the world. Beware of admiring it most of all for that grandeur. Let us fear lest its true grandeur escape our notice. Let us not allow our eye to be misled, and oblige Jesus Christ to say to us again, “Is it this you are looking at?” How great our misfortune if we should have entered the empire of the invisible only to link ourselves more securely to the visible, and if in the kingdom of spirit we should have been able only to find the world! How miserable, if trusting to those vain and hollow words, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord,” we should neglect, as the prophet says in the same place, thoroughly to amend our ways and our doings (*Jer. vii. 4, 5*). To look only to this twofold greatness of Christianity, the material and intellectual, is truly to do like the first companions of Jesus Christ, to fix our look upon stones. Vast thoughts, secular traditions, splendid recollections, all these are stones; cold materials, hard and dead. There are other stones, living stones, which form together a spiritual building, a holy priesthood (*1 Peter ii. 5*). (*Ibid.*) *Warnings*:—1. That sin has laid the foundation of ruin in the most flourishing cities and kingdoms; Jerusalem, the glory of the world, is here by sin threatened to be made a desolation. 2. That the threatenings of God are to be feared, and shall be fulfilled, whatever appearing improbabilities there may be to the contrary. It is neither the temple's strength, nor beauty, that can oppose or withstand God's power. (*W. Burkitt.*) *The destruction of the temple foretold*:—With this scene before them they must have found it harder still to acquiesce in the thought of the destruction of the city and temple. But the prediction of their overthrow contained an important lesson for the disciples and for us. It is this—

I. INSTITUTIONS AND SYSTEMS OF RELIGION OPPOSED TO CHRIST, HOWEVER STRONG AND SPLENDID THEY MAY APPEAR, ARE DOOMED TO DESTRUCTION. They have no guarantee for their continuance and perpetuity in the splendour and massive strength of their temples. Error is weak and on the road to downfall, no matter

how strong it looks, and truth is strong and on the way to victory, no matter how weak and insignificant it appears. Other religions besides Judaism have illustrated these truths. It was thus with the ancient Greek and Roman religions. When Paul went to Ephesus, where the goddess Diana was worshipped, her temple so magnificent and stately was regarded as one of the seven wonders of the world. What was thus witnessed in the ancient world, wherever and whenever its religions came in contact and conflict with Christianity, is repeated in every age. It is being witnessed to-day in Japan and in India where long-established systems of religion, with imposing rites and magnificent temples, are gradually being undermined by the influence of the gospel. The splendid and massive structures in which those religions have been enshrined have no power to preserve them. They are crumbling before the preaching of the Cross. They belong to those transitory "human things," whose fate a brilliant English historian compares to that of icebergs drifting southward out of the frozen seas. "So long as the equilibrium is sustained you would think they were stable as the rocks. But the sea-water is warmer than the air. Hundreds of fathoms down the tepid current washes the base of the berg. Silently in those far depths the centre of gravity is changed, and then, in a moment, with one vast roll, the enormous mass heaves over, and the crystal peaks which had been glancing so proudly in the sunlight are buried in the ocean for ever."

II. THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST ARE TO EXPECT AND BE ON THEIR GUARD AGAINST IMPOSTORS AND FALSE CHRISTS. "Many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many." The liability to be deceived by such impostors exists in all men. For in the souls of all there is an expectation of, or longing for, a mighty deliverer like the Messiah of the prophets. If Jesus is rejected, or not confidently believed in as the true Christ, some false Christ is likely to win their faith and lead astray. III. JESUS TEACHES HIS DISCIPLES THAT BEFORE HIS RELIGION FINALLY TRIUMPHS THEY MUST HEAR AND SUFFER AND WITNESS MANY DREADFUL AND DISTRESSING THINGS AS INCIDENTS IN ITS CONQUEST OF THE WORLD. "Ye shall hear," he said, "of wars and rumours of wars. . . . Nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom; there shall be earthquakes in divers places; there shall be famines. . . . They shall deliver you up to councils; and in synagogues ye shall be beaten; and before governors and kings shall ye stand for My sake for a testimony unto them." But the fearful prophecy was mingled with words that spanned the dark cloud with a rainbow of hope. "Be not troubled," He said; "these things must needs come to pass . . . these things are the beginning of travail." "They must needs come to pass," because they were the inevitable consequences of sin—the retribution long delayed but steadily accumulating, for the sins of the nation in the past. IV. IN THIS CONFLICT WITH SIN AND FALSE RELIGION THEY SHOULD RELY FOR DEFENCE AND FOR VICTORY UPON THE DIVINE HELP.

Vers. 7-28. Master, but when shall these things be?—*Judaism overthrown*:—I. THE MASTER'S WARNING CONCERNING FALSE CHRISTS. 1. Many will assume the daring rôle. (1) Some saying, "I am Christ." (2) Others saying, "The time draweth near." 2. There is danger of being deceived. "Take heed," &c. II. THE MASTER'S INSTRUCTION IN RESPECT TO WHAT MUST PRECEDE HIS COMING. 1. The great events which must precede. (1) Political commotion. (2) Physical changes. (3) Social distresses. 2. The persecution that must precede. (1) Its severity. (2) Its advantage. (3) Support under it. (4) Assurance and counsel in view of it. 3. Jerusalem's destruction must precede it. (1) This destruction was then near. (2) This destruction terrible. Lessons: 1. Christ's wonderful knowledge of future events. (1) He foreknew the destiny of all nations. (2) The opposition with which Christianity would be met. (3) The trials His disciples would have to endure. (4) Christ knows no surprise. 2. Christ's wonderful ability to maintain His gospel and to sustain his followers. (1) No power can overthrow it. (2) His followers will triumph. 3. Jerusalem's destruction symbolizes the dreadful doom of those who reject Christ. (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*) *The end*:—When I was a Sunday-school scholar—after I had finished reading my library books—I would look at the words on the last pages, "THE END," and underneath these words were pictures; some of them I remember. There was a hand holding an inverted torch, and it seemed to say, "The flame is dying out, this is the end." Another picture was a candlestick with a candle burned almost out, and the last flickering light of the candle said, "The light is going out, soon it will leave you in darkness." In another book a man was seen as having left his house, the door was closed and he was shut out in the outer darkness. He was walking in a

narrow path, and just before him there was a pitfall, and in it were the words, "The end"; truly man steps out of this life into the next. There was a picture I saw only once, but I can never forget the impression that it left on my mind. It was a midnight scene, with the moon and stars lighting up the darkness that hung over a graveyard, and on a tombstone more prominent than the rest were these impressive words, "The end." So there is an end to a book, an end to our days, our months, our lives, and an end to everything on earth. There is an end of working, of learning, and, whether neglected or improved, there will be an end of all our teaching. Sabbath-school scholars and teachers, "Work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work." (*American Sunday School World.*)

Experience of an earthquake.:—The traveller Humboldt gives an interesting account of the first earthquake he witnessed. It was at Cumana, in South America. The first shock came after a strange stillness. It caused an earthquake in his mind, for it overthrew in a moment all his lifelong notions about the safety of the earth. He could no longer trust the soil which up to that day had felt so firm under his feet. He had only one thought—universal, boundless destruction. Even the crocodiles ran from the river Orinoco howling into the woods; the dogs and pigs were powerless with fear. The whole city seemed "the hearth of destruction." The houses could not shelter, for they were falling in ruins. He turned to the trees, but they were overthrown. His next thought was to run to the mountains, but they were reeling like drunken men. He then looked towards the sea. Lo! it had fled; and the ships, which a few minutes before were in deep water, were rocking on the bare sand. He tells us that, being then at his wit's end, he looked up, and observed that heaven alone was perfectly calm and unshaken. Many strange things are yet to come upon the world—earthquakes, overturnings, upheavings. But amid them all, as the Book tells us, the Christian shall look up to the heavenly One, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," and to His heavenly home which cannot be moved. (*From "Bible Echoes."*)

Frequency of earthquakes.:—An earthquake is only a volcano hushed up. When Stromboli and Cotopaxi and Vesuvius stop breathing, let the foundations of the earth beware. Seven thousand earthquakes in two centuries recorded in the catalogue of the British Association. Trajan, the Emperor, goes to ancient Antioch, and amid the splendour of his reception is met by an earthquake that nearly destroys the Emperor's life. Lisbon, fair and beautiful at ten o'clock on November 1, 1755, in six minutes sixty thousand have perished, and Voltaire writes of them: "For that region it was the last judgment, nothing wanting but a trumpet!" Europe and America feeling the throb. Fifteen hundred chimneys in Boston partially or fully destroyed. But the disasters of other centuries have had their counterpart in our own. In 1812 Caracas was caught in the grip of the earthquake; in 1822, in Chili, one hundred thousand square miles of land by volcanic force upheaved to four and seven feet of permanent elevation; in 1854 Japan felt the geological agony; Naples shaken in 1857; Mexico in 1858; Mendoza, the capital of the Argentine Republic, in 1861; Manilla terrorised in 1863; the Hawaiian Islands by such force uplifted and let down in 1871; Nevada shaken in 1871, Antioch in 1872, California in 1872, San Salvador in 1873, while in the summer of 1883 what subterranean excitements! Ischia, an island of the Mediterranean, a beautiful Italian watering-place, vineyard clad, surrounded by all natural charm and historical reminiscence; yonder Capri, the summer resort of the Roman emperors; yonder Naples, the paradise of art—this beautiful island suddenly toppled into the trough of the earth, eight thousand merry-makers perishing, and some of them so far down beneath the reach of human obsequies that it may be said of many a one of them as it was said of Moses, "The Lord buried him." (*Dr. Talmage.*)

It shall turn to you for a testimony.—*The testimony of life*.:—The tale of it shall live on. The light of their lives shall shine through their forms and reveal the inner glory in eternity. This is the eternal recompense—revelation. The revelation of the Christlike spirit in a world where to be Christlike is to be glorious and blessed; where the scars of battle are marks of honour, and the martyr's brow is anointed like Christ's with the oil of joy and gladness through eternity. And now what are we doing which shall turn to us for a testimony at that day? A testimony of what? What is the record that shall be read out about us? What hidden things shall the book of remembrance reveal? How much is said and done daily because we love God and must do His will at whatever cost? Many a clever stroke of business is done, no doubt; many a happy speculation; or perhaps a brilliant trick, or next door to it. Quite

right, quite fair, no doubt, as business goes in these days, but not the kind of thing which will turn to you for a testimony when it is read out on high. Realize it. Set it before your mind's eye. Beings of angelic truth, purity, charity, all round you, circle beyond circle; and Christ, who lived that life which it makes us blush to read about, in the midst. And what is there in your life in tune with it; which you will hear read out with joy in that great company; which makes you the blessed freeman of that world in which "the Lamb who was slain" is King? What deeds do we leave for recompense at the resurrection of the just? No matter what the world thinks about it, the real question is, What do we think of it ourselves? In the quiet hours when the world is shut out, and its babbling is silent, what do we think of it? There is a sterner, surer Judge within than any that the world can set to weigh us. How stand we before that tribunal? It will prophesy to us how we shall stand before the bar of Christ at last. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*) I will give you a mouth and wisdom.—*Christ's promise the support of His despised ministers*.—I. THE PREDICTION here implied, viz., that the apostles should not fail of adversaries to oppose them. This, indeed, was to be no small argument of their apostolic mission. For such as engage themselves in the service of that grating, displeasing thing to the world, called "truth," must expect the natural issue and consequent of truth, which is a mortal hatred of those who speak it. The next thing offering itself to our consideration is, how this enmity (especially in the apostles' time, which the words chiefly point at) was to exert itself. 1. For gainsaying; the word in the Greek is *ἀντιτείνω*, importing opposition in disputation, with an endeavour to refel or confute what is alleged by another. And thus we find the apostles frequently and fiercely encountered by adversaries of very different persuasions, by Jews and Gentiles, and the several sects belonging to both. They were perpetually railed at as deceivers and impostors, even while they were endeavouring to undeceive the world from those wretched impostures and delusions which had so long and so miserably bewitched it: in a word, they were like physicians exchanging cures for curses; and reviled and abused by their froward patients, while they were doing all they could for their health and recovery. But—2. The other branch of the opposition designed against the apostles and ministers of Christ is expressed by "resisting"; a word importing a much more substantial kind of enmity than that which only spends at the mouth, and shows itself in froth and noise; an enmity which, instead of scoffs and verbal assaults, should encounter them with all that art could contrive or violence execute; with whips and scourges, cross and gibbet, swords and axes; and though bare words draw no blood, yet these, to be sure, would. And such were the weapons with which they were to act their butcheries upon the Christians; till at length, through all the sorts and degrees of cruelty, the same martyrdom should both crown and conclude their sufferings together. II. CHRIST'S PROMISE TO HIS APOSTLES OF SUCH AN ASSISTANCE FROM ABOVE AS SHOULD OVERCOME AND MASTER ALL THEIR ADVERSARIES' OPPOSITION. 1. For the thing promised, "a mouth and wisdom"; that is, an ability of speaking, joined with an equal prudence in action and behaviour. Which things we will consider first singly, and then in conjunction. And—(1) For the ability of speaking conferred upon the apostles. It was highly requisite that those who were to be the interpreters and spokesmen of heaven should have a rhetoric taught them from thence too; and as much beyond any that could be taught them by human rules and art as the subjects they were to speak of surpassed the subject of all human eloquence. Now this ability of speech, I conceive, was to be attended with these three properties of it. (a) Great clearness and perspicuity. (b) An unaffected plainness and simplicity. (c) A suitable and becoming zeal or fervour. (2) The other and next is that of wisdom, the noblest endowment of the mind of man of all others, of an endless extent, and of a boundless comprehension; and, in a word, the liveliest representation that a created nature can afford of the infinity of its Maker. And this, as it is in men, is properly the great principle, directing them how to demean themselves in all the particular passages, accidents, and occasions of human life, which being in the full compass of them indeed innumerable, to recount and treat of them all here would be next to impossible; but as for that wisdom which most peculiarly belonged to the first dispensers and ministers of the gospel, I shall only mention two instances, in which it most remarkably shows itself, namely—(a) That they opposed neither things nor persons, any further than they stood in their way in the ministry of it. On the contrary, "I am become all things to all men," says St. Paul, and that neither to gain favour nor interest, but only converts to Christianity (1 Cor. ix. 23).

(b) The other instance of the wisdom given by our Saviour to His apostles was their resolute opposing all doctrines and interests whatsoever, so far as they stood in opposition to the gospel. 2. The person promising, who was Christ Himself: "I will give you a mouth and wisdom." I lay particular stress and remark upon this, because Christ seems by this very thing to give His disciples an assurance of His resurrection. For surely they could not expect to receive gifts from above, while the giver of them was underground. III. By WHAT MEANS CHRIST CONFERRED THOSE GIFTS UPON HIS DISCIPLES AND APOSTLES; and that we find was by the effusion of the Holy Ghost, the author and giver of every good and perfect gift, ministerial gifts more especially. (*R. South, D.D.*) *A scoffer silenced*:—One evening, a few years ago, while a few believers in Christ were holding an open-air meeting in the Caledonian Road, London, a man commenced to mock the speaker and taunt him with being paid half-a-crown to come and preach to the people, and even went so far as to charge the preacher with telling a parcel of lies. No notice was taken of the mocker for some little time, but as he persisted in making a disturbance, and declaring that the person addressing the meeting did it for money, and that it was a good thing for him to be able to get half-a-crown so easily, the gentleman stopped short in his discourse, and turning to the scoffer, said, "My dear friend, it is you that are uttering untruths; I do not preach for half-a-crown, but for a crown, 'a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me;' and He will give you one too if you will only go to Him and ask for it." The disturber said but little after this, and stayed till the meeting closed. *A martyr's beautiful reply*:—That was a beautiful reply of Margaret Maitland, Scotland's maiden martyr, to her persecutors. They had bound an aged Christian to a stake far out between low and high tide, and Margaret herself to another stake nearer the shore. They hoped that, seeing the struggles and painful death of her companion, she would be terrified and would recant. She gazed on the awful scene with deep sympathy, but without any manifestation of fear. When they asked her, "Margaret, what do you see yonder?" she replied, "I see Christ suffering in the person of one of His saints." She knew that when her turn came to be suffocated by the rising tide Christ would be with her also; that He would share in her sufferings; that He would sustain her in the terrible ordeal. This is the kind of faith we need for ourselves and for the Church. *In your patience possess ye your souls.*—*Patience*:—It should rather read, By your endurance ye shall gain possession of your lives. It is also "ye shall bring your spiritual life safely through the coming troubles." It was a sore trial for the early Christians to be severed from their holy places, from their city home. In that sundering of cherished ties there lay, we may well believe, an agony that changed the very nature of those who endured it. But it taught them to look far afield, to bow down at no single shrine, and sent them forth to evangelize the world. Out of the ruin of their most cherished relics there grew up a more noble conception of the Church. Age after age each time of change has seemed to bring with it the end; at each crisis have been heard the same appeals to heaven, the same despair of earth; and yet to those who had patience the evil time has passed away, and men have found themselves living in a fresh air of hope with expanded vision and larger powers for good. Our tranquility is little affected by news of distant suffering. It is the old Horatian difference between the eyes and the ears. We fancy that our own troubles are far the worst the world has ever been called on to undergo. Warnings come from older men to whom the dark cloud seems to cover the heavens. The young see the sunshine coming up with soft rich colours of promise from behind the storm. Are there any peculiar causes for alarm? I. The alarm is as old as Christendom. II. The existence of some life is a cheering thing. III. We need more manliness in our religion; more that will attract hard-knit men. IV. If the Christian faith is to declare its Divine origin in the face of vehement attack or learned contempt, it cannot be by shutting itself up in safe sanctuary and refusing to enter the field with its antagonists. It is not without anguish that we rise "out of our dead selves to better things." Yet there is no other way for the nobles of mankind. (*Dean Kitchen.*) *On patience*:—The possession of our souls is a very emphatical expression. It describes that state in which a man has both the full command, and the undisturbed enjoyment, of himself; in opposition to his undergoing some inward agitation which discomposes his powers. Upon the least reflection it must appear, how essential such a state of mind is to happiness. He only who thus possesses his soul is capable of possessing any other thing with advantage; and, in order to attain and preserve this self-possession, the most important requisite is, the habitual exercise of patience. I know that patience is apt

to be ranked, by many, among the more humble and obscure virtues; belonging chiefly to those who groan on a sick bed, or who languish in a prison. If their situation be, happily, of a different kind, they imagine that there is no occasion for the discipline of patience being preached to them. But I hope to make it appear, that, in every circumstance of life, no virtue is more important, both to duty and to happiness; or more requisite for forming a manly and worthy character. It principally, indeed, regards the disagreeable circumstances which are apt to occur. But in our present state, the occurrence of these is so frequent, that, in every condition of life, patience is incessantly called forth. I. PATIENCE UNDER PROVOCATIONS. We are provoked, sometimes by the folly and levity of those with whom we are connected; sometimes by their indifference, or neglect; by the incivility of a friend, the haughtiness of a superior, or the insolent behaviour of one in lower station. Hardly a day passes, without somewhat or other occurring, which serves to ruffle the man of impatient spirit. Of course, such a man lives in a continual storm. He knows not what it is to enjoy a train of good humour. Servants, neighbours, friends, spouse, and children, all, through the unrestrained violence of his temper, become sources of disturbance and vexation to him. In vain is affluence; in vain are health and prosperity. The least trifle is sufficient to discompose his mind, and poison his pleasures. His very amusements are mixed with turbulence and passion. I would beseech this man to consider of what small moment the provocations which he receives, or at least imagines himself to receive, are really in themselves; but of what great moment he makes them by suffering them to deprive him of the possession of himself. II. PATIENCE UNDER DISAPPOINTMENTS. Are we not, each in his turn, doomed to experience the uncertainty of worldly pursuits? Why, then, aggravate our misfortunes by the unreasonable violence of an impatient spirit? Perhaps the accomplishment of our designs might have been pregnant with misery. Perhaps from our present disappointment future prosperity may rise. III. PATIENCE UNDER RESTRAINTS. No man is, or can be, always his own master. We are obliged, in a thousand cases, to submit and obey. The discipline of patience preserves our minds easy, by conforming them to our state. By the impetuosity of an impatient and unsubmitting temper, we fight against an unconquerable power; and aggravate the evils we must endure. IV. PATIENCE UNDER INJURIES AND WRONGS. To these, amidst the present confusion of the world, all are exposed. No station is so high, no power so great, no character so unblemished, as to exempt men from being attacked by rashness, malice, or envy. To behave under such attacks with due patience and moderation, is, it must be confessed, one of the most trying exercises of virtue. But, in order to prevent mistakes on this subject, it is necessary to observe, that a tame submission to wrongs is not required by religion. We are by no means to imagine that religion tends to extinguish the sense of honour, or to suppress the exertion of a manly spirit. It is under a false apprehension of this kind that Christian patience is sometimes stigmatized in discourse as no other than a different name for cowardice. On the contrary, every man of virtue ought to feel what is due to his character, and to support properly his own rights. Resentment of wrong is a useful principle in human nature; and for the wisest purposes was implanted in our frame. It is the necessary guard of private rights; and the great restraint on the insolence of the violent, who, if no resistance were made, would trample on the gentle and peaceable. Resentment, however, if not kept within due bounds, is in hazard of rising into fierce and cruel revenge. It is the office of patience to temper resentment by reason. V. PATIENCE UNDER ADVERSITY AND AFFLICTION. This is the most common sense in which this virtue is understood; as it respects disease, poverty, old age, loss of friends, and the other calamities which are incident to human life. In general, there are two chief exercises of patience under adversity; one respecting God, and another respecting men. Patience with respect to God, must, in the days of trouble, suppress the risings of a murmuring and rebellious spirit. Patience in adversity, with respect to men, must appear by the composure and tranquillity of our behaviour. The loud complaint, the querulous temper, and fretful spirit, disgrace every character. They show a mind that is unmanned by misfortunes. We weaken thereby the sympathy of others; and estrange them from the offices of kindness and comfort. The exertions of pity will be feeble, when it is mingled with contempt. (*H. Blair, D.D.*) On patience:—Now the feelings unavoidably disagreeable to us, and tempting us to impatience, are chiefly pain, sorrow, fear, and anger. 1. Pain: under which may be comprehended also sickness, restlessness, and languid lowness. 2. The next source of impatience before mentioned is sorrow: which sometimes is mere sympathy with the calamities of

others. 3. The next cause of impatience, mentioned before was fear. 4. The last trial of our patience, of which I proposed to speak, is anger. (*T. Secker.*) *Patient self-possession in times of trial*:—Be collected, that you may be strong; stand still, and stand firmly, if you can do nothing else; do not slip back, or step aside, or attempt anything wrong or questionable. Patience is not merely a passive submission to evil, a dull, stupid, unfeeling indifference, like the insensibility of wood or stone; it is the result of thought; it implies effort; it is a sort of active bearing up of oneself under the pressure of calamity, which at once indicates self-possession and secures it; it reacts upon that from which it proceeds, and causes it to become stronger and stronger. I wish now to request your attention to some of the advantages which flow from obedience to the precept, in the case of Christians, when called to suffer great affliction, or when exposed to the fear of impending calamity. 1. In the first place, there is the consciousness of not increasing the affliction by sin. If a Christian is impatient, and gives way to fretfulness and temper, or other forms of restiveness under trouble, he not only loses the advantage of calmness and self-possession, but his conscience receives a fresh injury; his proper religious feelings are hurt; his inward personal peace is disturbed; and thus the trouble presses upon him with double weight. It is a great blessing not to be exposed to this. 2. In the next place, self-possession in a time of trouble will enable an individual to take a just view of his actual circumstances, and of the nature and ends of the Divine infliction. We are under the rule and guidance of One who has always an object in what He does—an object worthy of Himself, and connected with the peace and holiness of His Church. 3. In the third place, the man who has full possession of himself in a time of affliction will be able to engage in certain exercises of mind which trouble calls to, but which are impossible, or next to it, when the soul is disturbed by agitation and excitement. "In the day of adversity consider." "Call upon Me in the day of trouble." "Glorify Me in the fire." "Enter into thy chamber." "Be still, and know that I am God." "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, neither faint when thou art rebuked of Him." But none of these things can be done, or done well, if the man is not quiet, patient, and self-possessed; if he is the victim of hurry, alarm, consternation, and surprise. 4. Observe, fourthly, that it is only by such self-possession as the text inculcates, that an individual will be able to select and apply the proper means of escape from calamity, or which may help him to meet it, or to counteract its effects. 5. In the last place, obedience to the text, explained as an exhortation, will best prepare a man for the end and result of trouble, whatever that result may be. If the cloud and the calamity pass away, and the man be fully delivered from it, he will be able to look back with serenity and gratitude, free from self-reproach or shame. If it terminate fatally, for himself or others, he will be able to acquiesce, with intelligent faith, in the Divine will. (*W. Binnie, D.D.*) *The soul won by patience*:—The Authorised Version reads, "In your patience possess ye your souls." It bids the imperilled Christian, fortified by promise, to endure to the end, keeping his soul tranquil and trustful. A beautiful precept, yet inferior, both in reading and rendering, but most certainly in the latter, to one other, which is that of the Revised Version, "In your patience ye shall win your souls." For the imperative we substitute the future; in other words, for precept we read promise. This is one change—for "possess" we read "win"; for a soul given in creation, we are bidden to look for a soul to be given in glory. The case is one of those in which the word before us always means to acquire, and never means to possess. Now we turn from a comparison of renderings to the application of the saying itself. "In your patience ye shall win your souls," "some of you shall be put to death," "ye shall be hated of all men," "not a hair of your head shall perish," "in your patience ye shall win your souls." Death itself shall not prevent this; for the soul here spoken of is the life's life, the thing which unbelief and unfaithfulness can alone forfeit for any man, the thing which is saved by faith, the thing which is acquired, gained, won in the exercise of patience. There is a lower truth in the saying in reference to this present life. Multitudes of human lives have been won by patience; the histories of battles and sieges are in large part histories of the triumph of patience; cities would have been lost, and fields would have been lost, but for the grace of patience in the commanders and the leaders. But certainly the converse is true; in patience has been defeat, has been disaster, has been bloodshed, a thousand and ten thousand times; the analogy of earth and time gives support to the promise when we read it as it was spoken of the soul and of things heavenly. What is patience as Christ speaks it? The Greek word for patience is made up of two parts,

one meaning continuance, and the other meaning submission; so that the combined term may be defined as submissive waiting, that frame of mind which is willing to wait as knowing whom it serves, willing to endure as seeing the Invisible; recognizing the creaturely attitude of subjection to the Creator; recognizing also the filial relationship which implies a controlling hand and a loving mind in heaven. Submissive waiting, this is patience, and we see, then, why great things should be spoken of it, why it should even be made the sum of Christian virtues, why to it rather than to any other grace, the promise should be affixed, "In your patience"—in the exercise, resolved and unwearied, of the grace of submissive expectancy—"ye shall at last win your souls." "Then the soul is not yet won?" Yes and no; the soul, the true life of each one, is already redeemed, bought, bought back with precious blood; and the soul, the life's life of each one, is already committed to us by Christ Himself for omnipotent keeping. "I know," St. Paul writes, "whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to guard my deposit"—the soul which I have committed to Him—"against that day." This is true. Our Lord speaks not here to contradict His own word, or to vitiate His own work, which says quite indiscriminately in Holy Scripture, "Ye were saved," that is, on Calvary; "Ye have been saved," this is, in redemption; "Ye are being saved," that is, in the work of grace; "Ye shall be saved," that is, in the day of glory. But, in fullest consistency with all these, there is room for a promise, "Ye shall win your souls." Let no man presume. There is a sense in which the life's life hangs suspended on that mark, as St. Paul calls it, which is the goal of the race. "I," he says, "count not myself to have apprehended." There is a grace of submissive expectancy; still, and because there is this, there is a something yet in front of me. At present I do not quite possess even my own soul. Oh! it often eludes me when I would say, "All my own I carry with me." Oh! there are many misgivings and doubtings in us, even in the things most surely believed. I cannot always command the life's life, which is the soul, when I would carry it with me to the mercy-seat. I find earth and the world, flesh, and sense oftentimes too strong and too predominately present with me just when I would be at my very best for prayer and praise. I cannot pretend to say that I have quite attained even to the possession of my own innermost being. A great promise. Now let us lose ourselves for a moment in the contemplation of this promise, "Ye shall win your souls"; and then in one last word see the connection of it with the realm and region of patience. "In your patience ye shall win your souls": at last my soul shall be my own. That is the promise. It is a wonderful interpretation of a wonderful saying appended to the parable of the unrighteous steward: "If ye have not been faithful in the use of" that which was so precarious and so fugitive that even while you had it it might rather be called "another's"—the possession in greater or lesser measure of the substance of this world—"who," our Lord asks, "who should give you that which is your own"—that which is your own, still to be won—the soul, the life's life of this text? Patience may lack, often does lack, one at least of its ingredients; there might be a waiting which was no submission, which, on the contrary, was indolence, was procrastination, was dallying, the man sitting still, and letting alone, and waiting upon chances which are no grace at all, but the opposite; or there might be a submission which was no enterprise, and waiting upon Providence with more or less of the resignation which is the ape and shadow of patience, which has in it no doing nor daring for Christ, no present running and fighting, and, therefore, no future crown. But who shall speak the praises of the real gospel, Christian, spiritual patience? (*Dean Vaughan.*)

Making for ourselves souls :—The revised translation restores this word of Jesus to its original force. The Lord did not bid His disciples simply to possess their souls in patience. He told them that through endurance they were to win their souls. Souls, then, are for us to win. Literally the word used by Jesus means, procure for yourselves souls. Life is to be to us, in some sense, an acquisition of soul. This active verb used by Jesus in relation to the soul is suggestive. How may the disciples acquire their own souls? Are we to work with the Creator in making our own souls? We are to go into life, and, as men in business gain possessions, we are to procure our souls from life. Souls, then, may not be such ready-made products of nature as we are accustomed to imagine; the souls of men are possibly but the seeds of immortality. They may be the germs scattered by a spiritual power in this soil of the flesh, and destined to spring up, and to grow, if we do not succeed in killing them, into the powers of an endless life. In what ways are we to set about procuring for ourselves souls? The first thing for us to do is the thing which those

men had already done to whom Jesus gave this promise that they should win their souls. What they had done—the first decisive step which they had taken in the work of finding their lives—was not, indeed, to acquaint themselves with all knowledge, or to peer into all mysteries. They had not even lingered at the doors of the school of the Rabbies. But when One who spake as never man spake, and who looked into men's souls with the light of a Divine Spirit in His eye, came walking upon the beach where they were mending their nets, and bade them leave all and follow Him, they heard their own being commanded as by the King of truth, and at once they left all and followed Him. They counted not the cost; they obeyed, when they found themselves commanded by God in Christ. This promise, "Ye shall win your souls," was addressed to men who had surrendered themselves wholly to that which they had seen, and knew of God. It was a pledge of soul made to men who had the wills of disciples. This prime condition of winning our souls remains unchanged, and no simpler or more searching words for it can be framed than those first requirements of Jesus Christ of every man—"Repent," "believe." If a man wishes in all sincerity to gain his own soul, he must begin by turning with a will from the sin of the world which he knows has laid foul, destructive hand upon his life; he must rise, and meet duty, trusting himself with all his heart to every whisper of truth and echo of God within him. The first step in the way of acquiring our souls, let me repeat, is the decision of discipleship. I answer then, secondly, we are to acquire soul by living now with all the soul we do have. If we are to win souls from life, we must put our whole souls into life; but the trouble with us is that we often do not. We live half-hearted, and with a certain reserve often of ourselves from our every-day life in the world. But you remember how Jesus insisted that His disciples should serve God and love man with all their souls, and with all their strength. The way to gain more soul and better is to live freely and heartily with all the soul we do have. Christ alone may show us what a whole-hearted, whole-souled life should be. He completes lives. He gives soul and heart abundantly in life. Has He not said we are to love God with all our minds, and all our hearts, and all our strength? "Yes," some one thinks, "but how can I in my little tread-mill of a life, in my circumscribed sphere, put my whole soul into it, live with all my might? I wish I had an opportunity of life into which I could throw all my soul—but what am I and my little place? I know I am not living with all my heart." But you may! You may, if you are willing to learn Jesus' secret, and to find your life while losing it. Perhaps in the very effort it may cost us to put our hearts into little things—to do common things as disciples heartily as unto the Lord—may be the exercise of soul which God has appointed for us that thereby we may gain capacity of spirit for the whole service of heaven. Right here it may help us to come back to our text. In your patience ye shall win your souls. Not many of those disciples to whom Jesus was then speaking became distinguished Christians. They had no great part to play in this world. All but three or four of the twelve are only names to us. But every man of them had a splendid chance to win soul by endurance. God gives to common people this opportunity of winning on earth souls large enough and good enough to appreciate by and by what heaven is. Patience may be the making of a soul. That regiment of men is held all the morning waiting under fire. They broke camp with enthusiasm enough to sweep them up to any line of flame. But they are held still through long hours. They might show splendid courage in action; but the orders are to stand. Only to stand still under fire! But that day of endurance is enough to make a veteran of the recruit of yesterday. The discipline of waiting under life's fire makes veteran souls. Through the habit of endurance God trains often his best souls. If you keep up heart in your life of trial, by that patience what a soul for God's kingdom may be won! (*Newman Smyth, D.D.*) *How to use life:*—How different life must look—how different what we call sometimes its strange providences must look—to the eye of one above who can see souls, and how they are forming for the endless life! And our own souls—is this world absorbing and exhausting them, or by the grace of God are we transmuting all our work and experience of life into more soul and sweeter? My friends, am I not bringing to you from this word of the Lord a very simple yet all-sufficient test for everything you are doing or planning in your lives? Can I acquire soul by it? Be sure, any course of life which causes any shrinkage of soul is not right. The open Christian life is constant enlargement of heart. Long ago the Hebrew poet looked up, and saw that the soul that runs in the way of the Lord's commandments is enlarged. "Be ye also enlarged," said an apostle, in Jesus' name. His gospel does not come to you and me with a close

system of restrictions confronting us on every hand with unnatural restraints. Christ does for us what Satan offered to do for Christ, but never had the power to do—He gives us all the kingdoms of this world, because He gives us receptive souls and pure hearts for all God's works and worlds. All things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's. You shall be disciples of the Divine Man. You are here for a little while to procure for yourselves souls, and to help others win their souls. God's Spirit is here with you to give you hearts in sympathy with all God-like things. Grieve not that Holy Spirit. Beware of anything which helps kill soul. A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. Acquire soul! (*Ibid.*) *Self-winning*:—This baby has to learn to see. He has eyes, sound, clear, lovely orbs into which a mother's eye looks as into deep wells of love, but when he emerges into consciousness and begins to take note of things around him, hold up a ball before him, and see how aimless is his grasp at it. His eye has not yet learned to calculate distances. You know how the blind, when restored to sight, have to learn to see: sight and seeing are not the same things. Sight is a gift of nature. Seeing has to be won. That blind man whom Jesus healed did not at once receive power to see. At the first touch he said, "I see men, for I behold them as trees, walking," in vague outline, confused, like the blending of trees in a grove. When Jesus laid His hand upon him a second time, he saw all things clearly. We see the same truth as related to special training of the senses. We have all heard the story of "eyes and no eyes." One man will see the material for a volume where another sees nothing but stocks and stones. And, going still deeper, there is that moral something which we call self-mastery. In how many do you see it? How many men do you see who make their thoughts work on given lines; who have their hand on the gates which shut out vain and wicked thoughts; in whom the whole moral and spiritual nature is obedient to law, and is marshalled and massed and directed by a supreme will? We say a man is self-possessed. What do we mean by that, but that there resides in the man a power which holds all his faculties at command, and brings them to bear in spite of all distractions? There can be no better phrase to express it. He possesses himself. He can do what he will with that side of the self which he chooses to use. Man's self must develop powers of resistance and control. It must be so completely in hand that he can say to wind and water, "You shall not possess me and carry me whither you will. Rather shall you do my bidding, and grind my corn, and turn my lathe, and carry me whither I will." "Nature, red in tooth and claw," roars and pants and rages after him. He must win his life from her jaws. And no less does the truth hold higher up. As we follow human nature upward, it is only the antagonists that change. The contact and the conflict are perpetuated. The Bible is full of this. It may indeed be said that the underlying truth of the whole Bible, working itself out through the successive stages of history and the infinite varieties of human experience, is, how shall a man win his own soul? A whole economy of secret, spiritual forces is arrayed against this consummation. Hence it is that Paul says, "We that are in this tabernacle do groan." Hence we are told of a wrestle which is not with flesh and blood, but with spiritual hosts; marshalled and organized evil in the spiritual realm; princes of darkness. So, too, our Lord told Peter of an unseen terrible power, fired with malignant desire to sift him as wheat. And under the stress of this fact, the whole current of New Testament teaching settles down into one sharply-defined channel; that spiritual mastery, self-possession, self-wielding, are the outcome only of patient effort and discipline protracted up to the very end. Accordingly we hear an apostle, far on in his Christian career, saying, "I keep my body under." The great feature of this text is that Christ points us away from circumstances to souls. You stand some day by the ocean swept with a tempest. It is a grand spectacle. A score of things in the clouds and in the waves appeal to you. You mark the height of the billows, their tremendous volume and swiftness and power, their mad struggle round the sunken reefs; but after all it is not the grandeur or the terror of the scene which most enchains you. Your interest is concentrated on that ship yonder. You forget the spectacle of the maddened ocean as you watch her fight with it. The question which fills your mind is not how long the storm is going to continue, or whether it is likely to become more severe. It is whether the ship will ride out the gale. And so all circumstances take their character from their relation to man's soul. The question is whether the man will ride out the storm of circumstance; the whole significance of circumstance turns on whether it will conquer the man or be conquered by him; whether it will swallow

up the soul, or whether the man will bring his soul alive and entire out of the tempest. This is the way in which Christ, as He is pictured in the text, looks out upon that horrible tempest of blood and fire; and this is the attitude of the whole Bible toward the struggle and convulsion of this world. Through it all God has His eye on man's moral destiny. To us, often, the principal things are the war and the confusion, the dislocation and the overturning. To Him the principal thing is the destiny of that soul in the midst of the storm. Will the man win his soul or not? Circumstances will adjust themselves if men are right. The great struggle in God's eyes is not between parties or sects or opinions. It is between the soul and the world. Victory is the man's overcoming the world; not one side of the world getting the better of the other; not the victory of the man's native force of will and physical power over the things which assail his fortune or his reputation, but the perfecting of his spiritual manhood in the teeth of all the loss and damage and pain which this world can bring to him. You and I will win this battle if we shall win our souls. (*Ibid.*)

Patience, the precious little herb:—Two little German girls, Brigitte and Wallburg, were on their way to the town, and each carried a heavy basket of fruit on her head. Brigitte murmured and sighed constantly; Wallburg only laughed and joked. Brigitte said: "What makes you laugh so? Your basket is quite as heavy as mine, and you are no stronger than I am." Wallburg answered: "I have a precious little herb on my load, which makes me hardly feel it at all. Put some of it on your load as well." "O," cried Brigitte, "it must indeed be a precious little herb! I should like to lighten my load with it; so tell me at once what it is called." Wallburg replied, "The precious little herb that makes all burdens light is called 'patience.'"

Jerusalem shall be trodden down.—*The desolation of Jerusalem confirms our faith in God's promises*:—Samuel Rutherford says: "We too often believe the promises as the man that read Plato's writings concerning the immortality of the soul. So long as the book was in his hand, he believed what was said; but as soon as he laid it down, he began to imagine that his soul was only an airy vapour that perisheth with the expiring of the breath. It would greatly help to preserve us from this, and strengthen our faith, if we oftener compared Scripture with Scripture, and prediction with fulfilment." Two rabbis, we are told, approaching Jerusalem, observed a fox running up the hill of Zion. Aged Rabbi Joshua wept, but Rabbi Eliezer laughed. "Wherefore dost thou weep?" demanded Eliezer. "I weep because I see what was written in the Lamentations fulfilled: 'Because of the mountain of Zion which is desolate, the foxes fall upon it.'" "And therefore do I laugh," said Rabbi Eliezer; "for when I see with my own eyes that God has fulfilled His threatenings to the letter, I have thereby a pledge that not one of His promises shall fail, for He is ever more ready to show mercy than judgment."

Restoration of the Jews:—In the year 1808, the generous Lewis Way, when riding with a friend in Devonshire, had his attention drawn by a companion to some stately trees in a park they were passing. "Do you know," said his friend, "the singular condition that is attached to these oaks? A lady who formerly owned this park, stipulated in her will that they should not be cut down until Jerusalem should again be in possession of Israel; and they are growing still." Mr. Way's heart was deeply moved by this incident. The idea of the restoration of the Jews took possession of his mind. In the following year he succeeded in forming the London Society of the Jews. The labours of this and other kindred societies have since been so graciously owned, that in England and on the Continent there are now thousands of Jewish converts, many of whom are ministers of the gospel, some of them preachers and students whose names have become almost household words in the Church of Christ. *There shall be signs*.—*Signs of the times*:—The mere simple relations of these portentous appearances strike us with horror: and Josephus, who has left us a full history of these times, informs us that they all actually happened at that tragical period. When he enters upon the subject, he uses some of the very words of this chapter, proposing to speak of the signs and prodigies which presigned the approaching desolation; and he mentions the following horrendous prognostications: A star, in the shape of a sword, or a comet, pointing down upon the city, was seen to hang over it for a whole year. There were other strange and unaccountable meteors seen in the aerial regions: armies in battle-array, and chariots surrounding the country and investing their cities; and this before sunset. The great gate of the temple, which twenty men could scarcely shut, and which was made fast with bolts and bars, opened of its own accord to let in their enemies: "for so," says Josephus, "our wise men understood the omen. At the ninth hour

of the night a great light shone upon the temple and the altar, as if it had been noon-day; and at the feast of Pentecost, when the priests went at midnight into the temple to attend their service, they first heard a kind of noise as of persons removing from a place, and then a voice, "Let us away from hence." And what Josephus relates is confirmed by Tacitus, a Roman historian of the same age who had no connection with the Jews. 1. There seems to be a correspondence and propriety in it, that there should be a kind of sympathy between the natural and moral world; that when the kingdoms of the earth are tossed and agitated, the earth itself should totter and tremble under them; that when the light of the rational world, the splendour of courts and kingdoms, is about to be extinguished or obscured, the sun and moon, and other lights of the material world, should abate their glory too, and, as it were, appear in mourning; that when some grand event is hastening to the birth, that terribly illustrious stranger, a comet, should make us a visit, as its harbinger, and shake its horrendous tail over the astonished world; that when peace is broke among the nations, the harmony of the elements should likewise be broken, and they should fall into transient animosities and conflicts, like the restless beings for whose use they were formed. There is an apparent congruity and propriety in these things, and therefore the argument is at least plausible; but as it is drawn only from analogy, which does not universally hold, I shall not lay much stress upon it. And yet, on the other hand, as there is an obvious analogy, which does unquestionably hold in many instances, between the natural and moral world, the argument is not to be utterly disregarded. 2. These unusual appearances are peculiarly adapted to raise the attention of mankind, and prepare them for important revolutions. There is a propriety and advantage, if not a necessity, especially with regard to that part of mankind (and there are always many such upon earth) whose benefit is intended by these extraordinary events and revolutions, that they be prepared for them. And they cannot prepare for them without some general expectation of them; and they can have no expectation of them without some warning or premonition of them. Now the ordinary appearances in nature cannot answer this end, because they are ordinary, and therefore not adapted to rouse and fix the attention; and because they really have no such premonitory signification. And as to the Word of God, it may have no direct perceivable reference to such extraordinary periods; and, therefore, can give us no previous warning of their approach. But these unusual phenomena are peculiarly adapted to this end: their novelty and terror catch the attention of the gazing world. Such premonitions would be striking illustrations of the goodness and equity of his administration, who does not usually let the blow fall without previous warning, and they would contribute to the right improvement of such dispensations. This, therefore, I think, we may look upon, at least, as a probable argument; especially if we add that, as these unusual appearances are, in their own nature, fit to be premonitions, so—3. It seems natural to mankind to view them in that light; and they have been universally looked upon in that light in all ages and countries. As to the Jews, the matter is clear; for Josephus tells us, that their wise men actually put this construction upon those alarming appearances, which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem. And as they had been accustomed to miracles for the confirmation of their religion, they were even extravagant in their demands of this sort of evidence upon every occasion; as we find in the history of the evangelists. As to the Gentiles, this was the general sentiment of all ranks among them, not only of the vulgar, but of their poets and philosophers. From mankind's generally looking for miracles to prove a religion Divine, and from impostors pretending to them, we justly infer that God has so formed our nature, that it is natural to us to expect and regard this sort of evidence in this case; and that God does adapt himself to this innate tendency, and has actually wrought true miracles to attest the true religion: and we may, with equal reason, infer from the superstitions of mankind, with regard to omens and prodigies, that God has given a natural bent to our minds to look for them; and that in extraordinary periods he really does give such previous signs of future events. 4. History informs us, that such unusual commotions and appearances in the natural world, have, with a surprising regularity, generally preceded unusual commotions and revolutions in the moral world, or among the nations of the earth. When an hypothesis is supported by experiments and matters of fact, it ought to be received as true. And this argument will appear decisive, if we find, in fact, that such commotions and revolutions in the world have been uniformly preceded by some prodigies: for such an uniformity of such extraordinary periods, cannot be the

effect of chance, or of blind natural causes, unadjusted and undirected by an intelligent superior power; but it must be the effect of design, a wise and good design, to alarm the world, and put them in a proper posture to meet these grand occurrences. There is nothing more natural, nothing which astronomers can compute with more exactness, than eclipses of the sun and moon; and yet these have so regularly and uniformly preceded the first grand breaches, and the total overthrow of kingdoms and nations, that we cannot but think they were intended to signify such revolutions; and thus mankind generally interpreted them. A total eclipse of the sun happened before the captivity of the ten tribes by the Assyrians; before the captivity of the Jews in Babylon; at the death of Christ, about thirty-seven years and a half before the last destruction of Jerusalem; and about the same number of years before the slaughter of six hundred thousand Jews under Adrian; before the conquest of the Babylonians by the Medes; and before the fall of the Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires. Upon the whole, let us endeavour to put ourselves in a posture of readiness to meet with all events that may be approaching. Though I know not these futurities, yet I know it shall be well with them that fear God: but it will not be well with the wicked; neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God. (*President Davies, M.A.*) *Second Sunday in Advent*:—This coming is not at death. Death is nowhere called the coming of Christ. It may be the going of the saints to Him, but it is not His coming to them, in any such sense as that in which we declare in the Creed: "He shall come to judge the quick and the dead."

Though, in some sense, always present, there are respects in which He is quite absent, in which He has been absent since the day of His ascension from the Mount of Olives, and in which He will continue to be absent until mankind "shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory." And in that same sense in which He is now absent from the earth, He is again to come to the earth, when "every eye shall see Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." I. Let us, therefore, in the first place, ASSURE OURSELVES OF THE SCRIPTURALNESS AND ORTHODOXY OF THE DOCTRINE, THAT THE GLORIOUS LORD JESUS CHRIST IS REALLY AND LITERALLY TO RETURN AGAIN IN PERSON TO OUR WORLD. This is the more important, as the tendencies are to neglect and explain away this article of the faith. It was a vital and characteristic part of the faith and hope of the early Christians to look forward to, and to expect, the coming again of the Lord Jesus. Indeed the whole success of redemption itself is conditioned upon His return. To strike it out, would confound the whole system of salvation, carry utter confusion into all attempts intelligently to believe or defend the gospel as of God, and dry up the heartiest and hopefullest springs of faith, holiness, and Christian life. II. With this point settled, let us look next at THE SIGNS WHICH THE SAVIOUR SPECIFIED AS THE HERALDS OF HIS SECOND COMING. These are given with great particularity in the text before us. Luther distinguished them into two leading classes; and we may safely follow him in this, as also in his exposition of the words which describe them. 1. He finds in the text a Divine prediction of an ever-growing earthiness, sensuality, and unbelief, on the part of the great mass of men, as the day of judgment draws near. There is to be no millennium of universal righteousness, liberty, and peace, before Christ comes; but "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Tim. iii. 13). 2. The second class is given with equal distinctness, and embraces many wonders in nature, so imposing as to challenge universal observation. III. Finally, let us glance at THE SORT OF AFFECTIONS WHICH THE OCCURRENCE OF THESE SIGNS OF THE SAVIOUR'S COMING SHOULD BEGET AND NURTURE IN OUR SOULS. Luther well read the human heart, when he said, "There be very few who would not rather that the day of judgment might never come." But this is not the way in which our Saviour would have us affected by this subject. It is indeed a terrible thing for the guilty, and is meant so to be, that it may break up their false security, and arouse them to repentance and a better life; but it is designed to be a joy and consolation to all true believers. It is intended to be a thing of precious promise and of glad hope to them. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*) *Terror produced by a meteoric shower*:—During a great meteoric shower in South Carolina, an eye-witness writes: "I was suddenly awakened by the most distressing cries that ever fell on my ears. Shrieks of horror and cries for mercy I could hear from most of the negroes of the three plantations, amounting in all to about six hundred or eight hundred. While earnestly listening for the cause, I heard a faint voice near the door calling my name. I arose, and taking my sword, stood at the door. At this same time I still

heard the same voice beseeching me to rise, saying: 'Oh, my God! the world is on fire!' I then opened the door, and it is difficult to say which excited me the most—the awfulness of the scene, or the distressed cries of the negroes. Upwards of a hundred lay prostrate on the ground—some speechless, and some with the bitterest cries, but with their hands raised imploring God to save the world and them. The scene was truly awful, for never did rain fall much thicker than the meteors fell towards the earth; east, west, north, and south it was the same." *Encouragement from Christ's promised advent*:—I. The persons unto whom these words are uttered, in the particle "your": "Lift up your heads." II. What things they are of which our Saviour here speaks, in the first words of the text: "Now when these things begin to come to pass." III. The behaviour which our Saviour commands unto us, in these words: "Look up, lift up your heads." IV. Last of all, the reason or encouragement; words of life and power to raise us from all faintness of heart and dulness of spirit: "For your redemption draweth nigh." It will not be amiss a little to consider whence it comes to pass that in the late declining age of the world so great disorder, distemper, and confusion have their place: and it shall yield us some lessons for our instruction. 1. And, first of all, it may seem to be natural, and that it cannot be otherwise. For our common experience tells us, that all things are apt to breed somewhat by which themselves are ruined. How many plants do we see which breed that worm which eats out their very heart! We see the body of man, let it be never so carefully, so precisely ordered, yet at length it grows foul, and every day gathers matter of weakness and disease, which, at first occasioning a general disproportion in the parts, must at the last of necessity draw after it the ruin and dissolution of the whole. It may then seem to fall out in this great body of the world as it doth in this lesser body of ours: by its own distemper it is the cause of its own ruin. For the things here mentioned by our Saviour are nothing else but the diseases of the old decaying world. The failing of light in the sun and moon—what is it but the blindness of the world—an imperfection very incident to age? Tumults in the sea and waters—what are they but the distemper of superfluous humours, which abound in age? Wars and rumours of wars are but the falling out of the prime qualities, in the union and harmony of which the very being of the creature did consist. Scarcely had the world come to any growth and ripeness, but that it grew to that height of distemper that there was no way to purge it but by a general flood, "in which, as it were in the baptism, its former sins were done away" (Hosea iv. 17). 2. But you may peradventure take this for a speculation, and no more; and I have urged it no further than as a probable conjecture. And therefore I will give you a second reason. Besides this natural inclination, God Himself hath a further purpose in it. He that observes the ways of God as far as He hath expressed Himself, shall find that He hath a delight to show unto the world those that are His; to lift them up on high, and mark and character them out by some notable trial and temptation. To draw this down to our present purpose: To try the strength, the faith, the love, the perseverance of those who are His, God is pleased to give way to this tumult and danger in the last days. He sets before us these terrors and affrightments, to see whether we fear anything more than Him, or whether anything can shake the reliance and trust which we repose in Him; whether our faith will be strong when the world is weak; whether our light will shine when the sun is darkened; whether we can establish ourselves in the power of God's Spirit when "the powers of heaven are shaken" (Matt. xxiv. 29). And indeed what are all these signs here mentioned but mormoes, mere toys to fright children with, if we could truly consider that, if the world should sink, and fall upon our heads, it cannot hurt a soul, nor yet so grind the body into dust that God cannot raise it up again? 3. As sin and iniquity have increased, so have the means to reclaim it. As wickedness hath broken in as a flood, so hath judgment been poured forth, and doth swell, wave upon wave, line upon line, judgment upon judgment, to meet it, and purge it, and carry it away with itself, and so run out both together into the boundless ocean of God's mercy. This is God's method; who knows whereof we are made, and therefore must needs know what is fittest to cure us. If His little army of caterpillars, if common calamities, will not purge us, He brings in sword, and famine, and pestilence, to make the potion stronger. III. Our third general part was the consideration of the behaviour which our Saviour commands unto us in these words: "Look up, and lift up your heads"; words borrowed from the behaviour which men use when all things go as they would have them. As herbs, when the sun comes near them, peep out of the earth,

or as summer-birds begin to sing when the spring is entered, so ought it to be with us "when these things come to pass." This winter should make us a spring; this noise and tumult should make us sing. Wars, famines, plagues, inundations, tumults, confusion of the world, these bring in the spring of all true Christians; and by these, as by the coming of summer-birds, we are forewarned that our Sun of Righteousness draws near. 1. Fear is a burden that maketh us not able to look upwards, towards that which might rid and ease us of it, but towards something that may hide and cover us. 2. Grief is another weight that presseth down. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" saith David (Psa. xlii. 5, 11). 3. These two, fear and sorrow, are the mother and the nurse, the beginners and fomenters, of all murmuring and repining. What are all the pleasures, what are all the terrors, of the world to him that is made one with Christ, who conquered also? That therefore this doctrine may pass the better, which at first sight is but harsh and rugged, we will show you—1. That it is possible to arm ourselves with such courage and resolution in common calamities. 2. That it is a great folly not to do so. 3. What impediments and hindrances they be which overthrow our courage, and take our hearts from us, when such things as these come to pass.

1. And, first, of the possibility of this doctrine. And, if we look a little upon the manners of men, we shall find them very apt and ready to plead impossibilities and difficulties where their own practice confutes them. Now to manifest the possibility of this, I think I cannot do it better than by an ensample; and I will give you one, and that too of an Ethnic man, that knew not Christ, nor His rich promises, nor ever heard of the glory of the gospel. There is a hill in Italy, Vesuvius they call it, which is wont sometimes to break out in flames of fire, to the terror and amazement of all that dwell nigh unto it. The first time that in the memory of man it fired, was in the days of Vespasian the emperor; at which time it brake forth with that horrible noise and cry, with that concussion and shaking of the earth near about it, with that darkness and stench, that all within the compass thought of nothing now but *æternam illam et novissimam mundo noctem*, "that time was ended, and the world drawing to its dissolution." Pliny, the great philosopher, and the author of the famous "History of Nature," lay then at Micenum, not far off: and out of a desire he had to inform himself, he drew near to the place where he thought the fire began. And in the midst of that horror and confusion so undaunted and fearless was he that he studied, and wrote, and ate, and slept, and omitted nothing of his usual course. His nephew, a great man afterwards with Trajan the emperor, out of whom I take this history, reports himself, that being there at that time, notwithstanding all the terrors and affrightments, yet he called for his books, he read, he noted, as if he had not been near the mountain Vesuvius, but in his study and closet: and yet was at that time but eighteen years of age. I have been somewhat the more large, besides my custom, in opening the particulars of this story, because it is the very emblem, the very picture, of the world's dissolution, and of the behaviour which is here enjoined Christians when that time shall come. What, though there be signs in the sun and moon and stars? must my light thereof be turned into darkness? must my sun set at noon, and my stars, those virtues which should shine in my soul, fall out of their sphere and firmament? When the world is ready to sink, do thou raise thyself with expectation of eternal glory. 2. I have done with the first point—the possibility of the doctrine, that we must arm ourselves with courage and resolution against common calamities. I proceed now to the second—that it is an argument of great folly not to do so. Is it not a great folly to create evil, to multiply evils; to discolour that which was sent for our good, and make it evil; to make that which speaketh peace and comfort unto us a messenger of death? 3. Let us now consider the lets and impediments, or the reasons why our hearts fail us at such sights as these. I shall at this time only remove a pretended one; having spoken of self-love and want of faith, which are real and true hindrances of Christian courage. The main pretence we make for our pusillanimity and cowardice is our natural weakness, which we derived from our first parents, and brought with us into the world. Fear not, therefore: why should we fear? Christ hath subdued our enemies, and taken from them every weapon that may hurt us. He hath taken the sting not only from sin, but from those evils which are the natural issues and products of sin. He hath made afflictions joyful, terrors lovely, that thou mayest "look up" upon them, and "lift up thy head." I have done with this pretence of natural weakness, and with my third part; and I come now to the fourth and last, the encouragement

our Saviour giveth: "For your redemption draweth nigh." IV. And "when these things come to pass," when such terrible signs appear, this news is very seasonable. "As cold waters to a thirsty soul" (Prov. xxv. 25), so is the promise of liberty to those "who have been in bondage all their life long" (Heb. ii. 15), under the fear of those evils which show themselves unto us, and lead us captive, and keep us in prison, so that we cannot look up. How will the prisoner even sing in his chains, when news is brought that his ransom is paid, and his redemption near at hand! It is a liberty to be told we shall be free: and it is not easy to determine whether it more affect us when it is come, or when it is but in the approach, drawing nigh; when we are free, or when we are but told that shortly we shall be so. And indeed our redemption is *actus individuus*, "one entire act"; and we are redeemed at once from all; though the full accomplishment of it be by degrees. But we may say truly of this first redemption what some in St. Paul said falsely of the second resurrection, This redemption's time "is past already" (2 Tim. ii. 18); past on our Redeemer's side, nothing left undone by Him: only it remains on ours to sue out our pardon, and make our redemption sure. And therefore there is another redemption that they call *præservantem*, "which settles and establishes us, preserves" us in an angelical state, free from sin, from passions, from fear. And when this comes, we shall sin no more, hope no more, fear no more: all sins shall be purged out, all hope shall be fulfilled, all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, and all trembling from our hearts. And this is the redemption here meant, the only trust of the Christian, the expectation of the faithful. (A. Farindon, D.D.)

Signs of nearing redemption:—Ere autumn has tinted the woodlands, or the cornfields are falling to the reaper's song, or hoary hilltops like grey hairs on an aged head give warning of winter's approach, I have seen the swallow's brood pruning their feathers and putting their long wings to the proof; and though they might return to their nests in the window eaves, or alight again on the housetops, they darted away in the direction of sunny lands. Thus they showed that they were birds bound for a foreign clime, and that the period of their migration from the scene of their birth was at hand. Grace also has its prognostics. They are as infallible as those of nature. So when the soul, filled with longings to be gone, is often darting away to glory, and soaring upwards, rises on the wings of faith, till this great world, from her sublime elevation looks a little thing, God's people know that they have the earnest of the Spirit. These are the pledges of heaven—a sure sign that "their redemption draweth nigh." Such devout feelings afford the most blessed evidence that with Christ at the helm, and "the wind" that "bloweth where it listeth" in our swelling sails, we are drawing nigh to the land that is very far off; even as the reeds and leaves and fruits that float upon the briny waves, as the birds of strange and gorgeous plumage that fly round his ship and alight upon its yards, as the sweet-scented odours which the winds waft out to sea assure the weary mariner that ere long he shall drop his anchor and end his voyage in the desired haven. (T. Guthrie, D.D.)

Vers. 29-33. Behold the fig-tree and all the trees.—*The parable of the fig-tree*:—I. TEACHING OF THE PARABLE. 1. Shows course and sequence of events as certain and necessary as the processes of nature. All is in progress. Be sure of the issue. Be alive to the tokens of its approach. 2. The incongruity of the comparison is its instruction. Its purpose to fix attention not on an end, but on a beginning; not on what going, but on what coming; not on tokens of dissolution, but on hidden life stirring beneath, after last storm to break out into the "kingdom of God." II. USE OF ITS TEACHING. 1. See that it belongs to you. 2. Live under the sense of what is coming. You need it—(1) To prevent this present world from absorbing you. (2) To prevent it from depressing you. (Canon T. D. Bernard.) *The big clock*:—Do you know that God has a big clock, bigger than any one you have ever seen, bigger indeed than Big Ben at Westminster. But this big clock does not make any noise, you can never hear it ticking; and it does not strike, but yet it goes on, year after year, year after year, marking the time. What do you think is the face of this clock? It is the earth; the fields and meadows and hedgerows in every part of the world—that is the face of this clock. And what do you think are the figures upon this dial? They are flowers and birds and leaves. God's big clock does not tick, but it lives; it does not strike the hours, only some flowers open out or die away when the hour has come. Isn't that what Jesus meant when He said, Look at the fig-tree and all the trees; they are beginning now to put out buds. Very well; you know by that that this is spring-time, and

by that you know that summer is coming near. The buds tell what o'clock it is by the time of year. When you were learning to tell the time on the face of the clock on the mantel-shelf, how did you begin? Was it not by first learning the quarters? When the long hand was half-way down on the right, you knew it was a quarter past; when it was half-way up on the left, you knew it was a quarter-to; and when it was down between these, you knew it was half-past; and when it was up between them you knew the clock was going to strike the hour. Well, just as there are four quarters in our clocks so there are four quarters in this big clock we are speaking about. The first quarter is springtime, half-past is summer, quarter-to is autumn, and when winter comes the year is ended. When you look at the trees and flowers you can pretty well tell what o'clock it is by the year. But standing between the quarters of the clock there are other figures. How many of these are there altogether? Twelve, are there not? And how many months are there in a year? You know—twelve. So, you see, this clock has got all the figures, and, what is stranger still, it marks all the figures by flowers and fruits; for there are different flowers that come out every month of the year. If a smart boy were to keep his eyes about him, and understood things as he walked in the country, when he found certain trees beginning to bud and certain flowers beginning to peep up, he would say, This must be the month of January; for these always come out in January. Later on, if he saw some others, he would say, This must be February; for these always come out in February. And so through all the year, if he was clever, he would find the flowers and trees telling him what month it was. But there is something stranger still about this clock of God's; and you must remember it, so that from time to time during the year you may learn to use your eyes and notice what God is doing in the fields. It is this: God's clock tells the hours of the day as well as the months of the year. The months are the twelve figures; but you know that between the twelve figures there are the little minutes, and these minutes are made up of moments. Now the minutes in God's big clock are days, and the moments are hours, and the clock tells them all. What then can be the meaning of this big clock? Surely it is to tell us that time is passing. Does it not plainly say that if we do not grow right in the springtime of our life, we shall not be able, when the summer comes, to go back to the springtime and mend what has been wrong? You would not like to grow up wicked, would you? Then learn to grow as the flowers grow. How is that? By always looking at the sun, and taking its light, and following it, for the flowers follow the sun with their heads, and so they become beautiful. Do you the same with Jesus—follow Him with your hearts.

(J. R. Howatt.) *Heaven and earth shall pass away.*—*Heaven and earth shall pass away*:—It is something to startle us, and make us ask ourselves, if indeed such things can be; whether He is in earnest who says so, and whether the world which practises upon us by its looks as though it were eternal, is indeed such an imposter, and we who believe it, so foolish and so ignorant! Yet so it is. Now, it seems to some of you, I dare say, as to most men, that this is a great deal more astonishing than that anything so inconsiderable, materially considered, as a man, should pass away, as you see happen every day by death. It seems a pity to break to pieces so goodly a machine as heaven and earth, and uproot its adamant basis. But if so, I think you are wrong. It seems to me nothing at all astonishing, that anything for which we have no longer a use should finally be thrown aside, or broken up, and the old materials put to some other purpose, be it an ordinary implement, or be it a world. It seems to me very reasonable and very likely in itself, that, in the infinite wisdom and power of God, one world should be ripened, so to say, out of another, as you see the fruit come out of the flower, and the flower out of the bud, so that the first shall decay before the higher one can be perfected. It is very reasonable that, as a mere manifestation of power, in order to show to his creatures the strength of His right hand, and the absolute independency of His will, God should dash in pieces, from time to time, or consume by the breath of His nostrils, what was made by His word, and stood only by His sufferance. Besides, in the elements out of which heaven and earth are made, there is no thought or feeling; they are brute, dead things; and are capable neither of pain nor pleasure. Whether they abide or not in the forms into which God has thrown them, it is the same to them; no harm is inflicted on them; they are as unconscious of change as they are impotent to feel or will. But, if heaven and earth must pass away, another consequence will follow, which is to every one of us of awful importance. If the earth, such as it now is, shall be utterly destroyed, manifest it is, that our present life,

and cares, and pleasures, and occupations, all that men make their happiness of, will likewise be brought to an end. And this brings me to another point—and a reason for the passing away of the present world, which I have not yet mentioned, though it might easily occur to any thoughtful mind. It is a condemned world; sentence is passed upon it! And it is condemned, because it is guilty, and all over polluted! And do not wonder at this, for you know with what feelings we regard a chamber or a house in which a murder, or some abominable crime, has been committed; how we shrink from it and abhor it, and hate the sight of it, and should think it the greatest misery in the world, if we have any feelings worthy of man, to be compelled to take up our abode within it. A sort of guilt, as well as involuntary pollution, seems to attach to the very floors and senseless walls which have witnessed the crime, and have not fallen down or opened upon the wicked in the midst of their wickedness. And we should rejoice at seeing them pulled down to the ground, and the last memorial of the crime removed from our eyes! Well, so it is exactly in regard to the world in which we live, with all its majestic mechanism, its living forces, and all the ornaments which God's hand has thrown round about it. It is stained with six thousand years of sin. And this brings us to another portion of the question. If heaven and earth shall pass away, shall anything succeed into their room, or shall that space which they occupied be utterly blank and desolate? The answer is, no. So to say, there shall rise two new worlds, or such a change as comes to the same thing, out of the ruins of it; even as out of the earth destroyed by the flood there sprung forth that in which we now dwell. There shall be the new heavens and new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness, and the face of God's countenance shineth for evermore—the habitation of those who have lived and died in the Lord. And on the other hand, the world, where the light is darkness, and the life is death, and the good is evil, and weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth are the voice thereof—even the habitation of the ungodly for ever and ever. And this gives you the true reason, dear brethren, why the judgment is now suspended, and sun and moon are shining, and night and day, and spring and harvest, come and go, and all things remain as at the beginning. It is that God's last dispensation upon earth may have full room and time to display itself in all its combinations with human good and evil, before the voice from the throne shall proclaim that it is finished. It is that, in the sight of all His creatures, the patience and long-suffering of God, which leadeth to repentance, might have full space and opportunity in which to show themselves, and vindicate to the uttermost the exceeding forbearance of our heavenly Father even towards them that perish! It is that, year after year, His saints may be gathered in till, in the fulness of time, the flock which he has given to Christ shall have been called out of all nations and languages, and the Saviour be satisfied in the sight of His soul's travail. (*J. Garbett.*) **My words shall not pass away.**—*The words of Jesus permanent*:—I. The words of Jesus Christ, the words which He spoke for our direction, for our purification, for our comfort, for our redemption, have not passed, and shall not pass away. Our human intellect accepts them with reverence, and must ever retain them. Our human passions acknowledge their salutary power, and look up to them for perpetual control and guidance. Our human fears are soothed by them, and cannot let them go. Our human hopes are informed, elevated, and sanctified by them, and constantly resort to them for refuge, and lean upon them for rest. All our human affections have borrowed from them Divine light and warmth, and must reflect that light and warmth for ever. II. "Heaven and earth shall pass away." Giving to this sentence an individual application, we may feel that heaven and earth pass away from the sight of all of us. Fancies as brilliant as the blue vault above us, promises as fair, expectations and resolves as high, and possessions which we have deemed as firmly founded as the earth itself, have vanished, and will again vanish; and what is there left behind? The words of Christ are left, when the visions break, and the possessions disappear—words of patience, and courage, and comfort, always left for the strengthening of our hearts, if our hearts will hear and accept them. The words of Jesus are the promises of God the Father to the souls of men. When eyes are growing dim, and the heart is ceasing to beat, and heaven and earth are passing away, as they surely will from all of us, what remains for the soul's help and reliance but the words of Jesus, which are the promises of God? III. And let us remember that the words of Jesus, attested as they are by the Father who sent Him, permanent as time has proved them, true, and satisfying, and lasting as the human soul has found them, are not only the promises of God for man's hope and trust, but the law of God for man's final judgment. As such

they will remain, when heaven and earth, in any and every sense, have passed away. The words of Christ, essentially permanent, and surviving all change, will meet our souls in the last day, and be pronounced upon them, for acquittal or for doom. And certain and necessary it is, that the sentence which will be adjudged unto us hereafter by those words, will be in strict accordance with the observance or the neglect with which we treated them here, before our present heaven and earth had passed away. (*F. W. P. Greenwood, D.D.*) *The ineffaceable word* :—On one occasion when William Dawson, the Yorkshire Preacher, was giving out a hymn, he suddenly stopped and said : “I was coming once through the town of Leeds, and saw a poor little half-witted lad rubbing at a brass plate, trying to rub out the name; but the poor lad did not know that the harder he rubbed the brighter it shone. Now, friends, sing :—

‘Engraved as in eternal brass
The mighty promise shines;
Nor can the powers of darkness raise
Those everlasting lines.’”

Then, as though he saw the devil rubbing, he said : “Satan cannot rub it off—

‘His hand hath writ the Sacred Word
With an immortal pen.’”

The enduring words :—An infidel in London had a wife who possessed a Bible which she regularly read; being annoyed at this, the man, who had frequently threatened to do so, threw the book upon the fire. This appears to have taken place at dinner-time. He then left home to go to his work, but soon returned to see if the last vestige of the volume had disappeared. The woman, who naturally felt distressed at her loss, said she thought it must be completely burned; but her husband stirred the ashes to see if such was the case, when he read what fastened itself upon his mind, and led to his conversion—“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away.” The sister of this man was the wife of a London pastor; and just when the Bible was burning she was earnestly praying for her brother’s conversion. (*Sword and Trowel.*)

Vers. 34, 35. *Surfeiting and drunkenness*.—*Gluttony and drunkenness to be avoided* :—I. I will attempt to show you THE EVILS AND MISCHIEF OF THESE SINS WHICH OUR SAVIOUR HERE CAUTIONS US AGAINST. Be it known to you, then, that miseries are the effects and fruits of these vices. Gluttony and greediness drove our first parents out of Paradise. They tell us that Heliogabalus used to bring his parasites into dining-rooms that had deceitful floors, and thence they fell and were destroyed. This is but an emblem of the ruin which attends those who are addicted to immoderate eating and drinking. Besides what I have said already, I will farther show you the pernicious effects of this luxurious practice in these five particulars. 1. This vice is generally fatal to men’s estates, as the wise man observes, and therefore dissuades from this folly (*Prov. xxiii. 20, 21*). 2. How unspeakably pernicious is this sin to the body as well as the estate! 3. This sin is injurious not only to the body of man, but to his mind and soul, his better and more refined part. Its operations are stifled and choked, its faculties are rendered dull and useless, and the excellent spirit which was made to look up to heaven bows down to the earth, becomes gross and carnal, and is plunged into dirt and mire. 4. Luxurious eating and drinking are the nurses of wantonness and uncleanness. 5. Contempt and disgrace are the just reward of luxury. II. I am to lay down CERTAIN RULES AND DIRECTIONS WHEREBY YOU MAY ORDER YOURSELVES ARIGHT IN THE USE OF THE PLEASURES OF MEAT AND DRINK. These are things natural and necessary, and therefore lawful and innocent in themselves. 1. Offend not as to quantity; eat and drink no more than what is requisite. Nature is content with slender provision, and Christianity maintains the same moderation. 2. Offend not as to quality, that is, be not over-curious in the choice of your meats and drinks. 3. Desire not to fare more costly than is agreeable to your condition. 4. Be careful that you spend not too much time in eating and drinking. 5. (And which is near a-kin to the former rule) Make it not your grand business to eat and drink. 6. Then these bodily refreshments of meat and drink are lawful and commendable, when they are accompanied with charity towards the needy. 7. Let your eating and drinking be

attended not only with charity, but with all other testimonies of religion and serving God. Among the pagans their tables were sacred. It should be much more so among Christians, that is, we should make them serviceable to virtue, and to the promoting of our own and others' spiritual good. III. I will propound to you some **HELPS AND ASSISTANCES**. 1. That you may not offend God by the extravagant use of meats and drinks, begin within, and strive to check your undue appetites there. Intemperance and luxury begin at the heart; stifle it there. 2. You may be helped in the discharge of the duty which I have been treating of, by understanding yourselves aright, by considering your excellent nature and make. 3. To antidote you against this immoderation in meats and drinks, think seriously of the dreadful judgments of God which attend this sin (see Isa. v. 11; Amos vi. 1, &c.). 4. Think of death and judgment, and the serious consideration of these will be serviceable to check you in your intemperate courses. (*John Edwards, D.D.*) *Ruined by drink*.—The following fact is related by a worthy clergyman, who lived and officiated not far from this place. "There are persons so hardened in sin, and so totally given up of God, that neither sickness nor death can make any impression on them. I remember one of this unhappy description, in the county of Essex, whom I both visited during his illness, and interred after he was dead. He was a clever fellow, and of good family, but so totally depraved, that when one of his bottle companions wrote to inform him that he was about to die and go to hell, and desired to know what place he should bespeak for him there, he sat down and gave him for a reply, that he did not care where it was if there was only brandy and rum enough. Thus he lived, and soon after died a martyr to spirituous liquors, cursing and blaspheming, notwithstanding all that could be done to bring him to a better mind. Being possessed of two bank bills, of the value of ten pounds each, which was all the little property he had left,—'Now,' said he to a person who stood by, 'when I have spent these in brandy and rum, I shall be content to die and go to hell.' He sunk, however, before they were expended, and left just enough to bury him." (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *The luxury and worldliness of the present age*.—I. First, **THE WARNING**. To whom is that warning addressed? "Take heed to yourselves; . . . for as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth." You see there is a contrast drawn between yourselves and the whole earth. "Yourselves" shows us to whom the warning is spoken—it is to the Church. To His own washed, saved, sanctified ones, He says, "Take heed to yourselves." He says to them, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and the cares of this life." Mark that expression, "at any time." It would seem as though the prophecy has a continuous bearing, from the time that it was delivered up to the end of the world—that this warning is spoken to the Church of God in all ages. Take notice here that the heart is spoken of as meaning the inner life of a Christian. Take heed lest the springs of spiritual life be weakened by the cares, or the frivolities, or the ease, or the luxury, or the gains, or the occupations of this present life. The word "overcharged" literally means "weighed down." You see that not only surfeiting and drunkenness are spoken of, but "the cares of this life." On the one hand the Lord speaks of all the glare of earth, on the other hand He speaks of the toil of earth. II. Now, see **THE REASON OF THE WARNING**.—"For as a snare shall it come upon all them that dwell upon the face of the whole earth." The meaning of this is, that the day of the Lord will take the world by surprise. III. Thirdly, we come to speak of **THE PRECEPT GROUNDED UPON THE WARNING**, and the reason of the warning—"Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and stand before the Son of Man." You may have marked in history, that before empires fell, or great capitals were destroyed, luxury in the empire or in the capital had reached a climax. It was so at Herculaneum and Pompeii; it was the case at Rome. Every species of indulgence, luxury, and comfort seemed to be gathered together by the inhabitants around, when the burning mountain poured forth its flames, while streams of lava buried the cities, and hurried the people into eternity. And so, when Rome was taken by the Goths, or northern nations, it had reached the highest point of luxury, pomp, and pride. So Babylon is described in the Revelation—whatever that Babylon means—it is described as saying, just before it is destroyed—"I sit as a queen, and am no widow." In the very height of her pomp—in the very zenith of her pride—in the midst of her magnificence, God casts her down, and she sinks like lead in the mighty waters. It will be so, doubtless, with the nations of the world—with the kingdoms of pro-

fessing Christendom—with the great capitals of Europe; there will be pride, and luxury, and magnificence, and men will be passing their time in ease and affluence, and self-indulgence, “when sudden destruction shall come upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.” Watch ye, therefore; watch against the prevailing taste for show—watch against the prevailing love of ease—watch against the selfishness of the age, the luxury that creeps even into the Church; watch and take heed, brethren, lest you tread in the world’s footsteps. (W. Pennefather, M.A.) *A heart overcharged with care*:—I. Let us, think, then, in the first place of WHERE THIS INJUNCTION REALLY APPLIES TO US—When is the heart “overcharged with care”? Distinguish between care and sorrow. God sends sorrows but He never sends cares. No one can doubt the necessity for sorrow, it has a part in our development which nothing else can fulfil, and, therefore, as long as God loves us and would do His best for us we may be sure we shall suffer, and that such suffering never need be a curse, but care always must. Who are the most miserable to-day? Not the sorrowful, but the careworn. When Christ said “Take heed lest your hearts be overcharged with care,” He pointed to life’s great tyranny. When, then, does this concern us? The word means “oppressed,” “weighed down.” 1. Then it is true when the heart is not able to rise. Spiritual aspirations have not quite died out nor are heavenward promptings ever felt, but the soul cannot respond to them; response needs thought, time, effort, and these cannot be spared, so life is absorbed by the earthly, and the higher things are as though they were not. Then, indeed, the heart is overcharged (oppressed, weighed down) with care. 2. So, too, is it when the heart has no room for the play of its best affections. So I say is it right to be so absorbed by business that we are practically lost to everything else, are practically slaves to money-getting, and deadened to those influences and enjoyments by which our better nature is developed and the deep places of our heart satisfied? We cannot believe it is. 3. And so, too, when the heart finds care to be a burden that crushes it. God means us to be free from oppression. His promises and requirements and the provisions of His grace all point to that: “Come unto Me and I will give you rest,” says He, “peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you,” “be careful for nothing,” “take no anxious thought,” “the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your heart and mind.” II. Consider WHAT OUR LORD SAYS ABOUT THIS STATE. “Take heed!” He says, “take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with care.” That is, you may fall into this state unawares, to avoid it needs much watchfulness. Glance at two or three facts which blind us to the perils of a care-burdened heart. 1. For instance, it seems inseparable from duty. The tendency of our time is opposed to calm life, and even to calm pauses in the midst of life. How seldom one sees a really quiet face! Care need not be, that is. Let us not be misled into it with the idea that it is unavoidable, that we cannot perform our proper task and keep our proper place without being oppressed by it. Christ’s “Take heed!” means that if we will, for all appearance to the contrary, we may escape the evil. 2. Then, it seems consistent with devotion to Christ. That is another point which makes us think lightly of care—there seems to be no sin in it. But see the company this keeps in the text: “Hearts overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares!” “Surfeiting and drunkenness and cares”—these are classed together in the mind of Christ. Then failure in these matters, as much as failure in the other, is to be abhorred as disloyalty to God. Care springs from very evil roots, from unbelief and waywardness and very often from an idolatrous spirit. Therefore let us not go into it or live in it deceived as to its nature, as though it were harmless, but let us shrink from it alarmed at our Lord’s warning: “Take heed!”—“Take heed lest at any time your heart be overcharged with care.” 3. Then, too, it seems the natural result of temperament. That is another fact which blinds us to its evil, for we are apt to excuse certain forms of wrong-doing if we have, as we think, a tendency to them. Let us give up making light of the sin of care because it is natural, and of thinking that because it is natural it is unconquerable. Consider, thirdly, WHAT THIS WORD OF OUR LORD YET FURTHER IMPLIES. The command not under any circumstances to have “hearts overcharged with care,” is a most solemn assurance that this is possible. We can rise to some measure of it at once, but its full measure is the fruit of spiritual culture. Briefly notice the lines this culture must take. 1. We must train ourselves to undertake nothing but at the bidding of God. Cares are largely due either to a consciousness that we have taken our affairs into our own hands and must be responsible for the result, or to a feeble

realization that having obeyed God we are His servants and are thus under His protection. Deliberate obedience is one of the great secrets of peace. 2. And we must train ourselves to commit our cares fearlessly to Him. Many of them are self-imposed, and, as I implied, it will not be easy to lose their burden. We must avoid such. 3. I need only add that we must train ourselves to regard communion with God as our first duty. For that communion is the basis of the faith I speak of. (C. New.)

Ver. 36. Watch ye, therefore, and pray always.—*Christian preparation for the coming of the Lord*:—The subject of our inquiry to-day will be—"What practical effect ought the doctrine of the Lord's second coming to have on you and me, living when and where and as we do?" On the certainty of that coming, I need, I suppose, say very little. On the manner of that coming, we possibly may not be agreed; the time of it is expressly and purposely concealed from us. Two things, therefore, seem to me to have a right, as elements, to influence our practice in this matter; the absolute certainty that the day will come, and the absolute uncertainty when it will come. In fact, in both these respects we are in much the same situation as we are, when in health and strength and the prime of life, with regard to the day of our death. We know that it must be; but no sign appears of its immediate approach. And from this example, so common and so well understood, we may perhaps be able easily to deduce our duty in the other case. The wise course with regard to the inevitable day of one's death appears to be this: never to lose sight of the certainty of it, but to keep ourselves ever ready, while at the same time we do not morbidly brood over the fact, nor allow it to interrupt our duties in life. And here, as in that other case, we must avoid a diseased and restless state of anticipation, as well as the opposite extreme of entire forgetfulness. But perhaps it may be said, In laying down rules for the one consideration, that of our own deaths, are we not also including the other, the expectation of the coming of the Lord? Certainly, in some particulars the two great events coincide; but by no means in all. And it may be profitable for a few moments to ask ourselves wherein they are identical, and wherein each has its region peculiar to itself. They coincide in that each event, as far as we are concerned, will put a limit to this our present state of existence; but they differ, in that the one will do this for ourselves alone; the other, for all mankind. And this is a strictly practical consideration; for I suppose few of us are so selfish as to confine our anticipations and provisions to ourselves alone, but we all extend them over those who are to come after us. The certainty, then, of the day of the Lord will influence those provisions, if we look on it as bringing the limit of this state of time; we shall be rather anxious to do present good with our substance, making moderate provision for our successors, than to lay the foundations of great possessions, and starve our charities to do so. Again, they differ, in that the one brings to ourselves alone the final state; the other completes the great scheme of redemption. The number of God's elect will be accomplished, and His glorious kingdom will have come. And such a consideration, while it may not have much distinctive influence upon our individual Christian lives, ought to have much upon our regard of our relative duties, and our efforts for spreading Christ's gospel on earth. (Dean Alford.)

On preparing for Christ's coming rather than for death:—Of all the subjects on which we may speculate as to our own state and destination, perhaps none is so mysterious, none so difficult to form a definite idea of, as the condition of the dead after the act of death; on the other hand nothing is more simple and clear, than their state after the coming of the Lord. There is, then, this consideration, which is worthy at least of our notice; that the looking for and waiting unto the day of the Lord brings us something more definite, something immediately following it of a more tangible kind, more calculated to make a deep impression on us, than the contemplation of the day of our own death. The realities consequent on the one are and must be, even to the strongest faith, shrouded in a mist which is to us impenetrable; the other, with its realities, stands forth boldly before us, marked out in all its features by the hand of Christ Himself. So that the man who waits for the Lord's coming is likely to be more definite, more assured, more manly and determined in whatever effects on his character such anticipation may have, than he who merely looks forward to his own death. Moreover, when we compare the two as to the question, which best befits the Christian as an object of thought and expectation—we cannot, I think, hesitate a moment. The New Testament

is full of exhortations to watch and prepare for the Lord's coming. From His own discourses while on earth in the flesh, through those of the apostles in the Acts, through the Epistles of St. Paul, St. Peter, St. James, St. John, St. Jude, even to the latest written words of the Spirit in the Revelation, no command is more frequent, none more solemnly impressed on us, than that we should keep that great event constantly in view, and be ever ready for it. Whereas we shall hardly find one exhortation, addressed directly to us as Christians, to be ready for the day of our own death. And why so? clearly not because such readiness is not necessary—far from it indeed—but because the greater absorbs the less: because the promise of our ascended Saviour—His return to us—His coming to take account of His servants—includes in it all that the other possibly could do, and very much more; because death is at the best but a gloomy thing, bearing trace of the curse, accompanied with pain and sorrow, whereas the Lord's coming is to His people a thought full of joy—the completion of their redemption, the beginning of their reign of glory. (*Ibid.*)

Preparation of heart:—We want, in our preparation for the day of the Lord, lightness of heart; hearts which we can lift up to heaven where our treasure is; hearts which are not tied down to this earth—not cleaving to the dust. And how may we lighten our hearts? The first lightening—the first rolling off of the burden which weighed so heavily on them, is the work of God's Spirit in the day of His power; is that setting free from the load of sin by the blessed effects of justifying faith in Christ, in which the law of the Spirit of life makes us free from the law of sin and death. But how may we best keep them, when thus lightened, from again accumulating a burden, and being weighed down from their proper object of contemplation and desire? Listen to our Lord's command. It is the surfeiting of this world's employments and pleasures which thus clogs the heart. This, then, of all things is to be shunned, if we would be prepared for that day. You cannot, beloved, be casting yourselves fully into the arms of the world, and be prepared for the coming of the Lord. The two things are absolutely incompatible. If you choose the part of eagerness about things present, that day will come upon you unawares—whether it come with the sign in the clouds and the resurrection trumpet, or with the sinking of the flesh and heart, the curtained chamber, the bedside group fading away from the failing vision. (*Ibid.*)

The command to watch:—Two facts concerning His advent are plainly stated and they are all that a majority of His Church will perceive, namely: that we are ignorant of the time of the end; that it will be sudden. I. THE READY SOUL IS THE DILIGENT. II. THE READY SOUL IS THE VIGILANT. III. THE READY SOUL IS THE PRAYERFUL. (*De Witt S. Clark.*)

The safety of prayer:—Our Lord did not so much urge the duty of praying as the safety of prayer. I. To this, then, let us first turn our thoughts. Jesus mentioned as the special aim of prayer: "That ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things," *i.e.*, calamities, that their city, nation, race, and, in fact, the human family were liable to experience, but yet might escape if only they would seek to be accounted "worthy" to do so. The word "worthy" as here used calls for examination; for if it be taken in the sense of deserving because faultless, there is no use in saying anything about it: we are not that; and we never can so be "accounted worthy," having already committed aggravated offences against God without number, which have brought compromises of guilt and stains upon our souls. The idea of merit, however, which the word "worthy" usually carries with it, is not at all intended in this verse. The verb used is a military term really, meaning to conquer, to win a victory, to prevail against another, against an enemy, against baffling influences and hindering circumstances. Hence the meaning of the word in the text is: that they might be able to prevail and escape all the calamities Jesus had been speaking of. The Revised Version sustains this interpretation. It gives the text: "But watch ye at every season, making supplication that ye may prevail to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." It was not that He counselled His disciples to deserve or merit safety through their good conduct, although their good conduct was to be as binding as ever, but to pray that they might be tenacious of purpose, unyielding, and therefore, successful in overcoming temptation, walking so faithfully with their Lord Jesus Christ, as to practise good conduct and persevere in it. II. Mind, they were to pray that they might be tenacious. On that they ought to resolve; ought to set out to be tenacious in Christian living, in overcoming human oppositions, surmounting temporal obstacles, social hindrances, threats of rulers, frowns of society, oppositions of

families, clamours of self-interest, desires for enjoyment, and lusts that ruin the soul—bearing their cross to follow after Jesus; but still, in addition to all this, nay in order to accomplish all this, they were to make continual and systematic applications to the Most High God. Wherever you have failed tell it to God; in perfect frankness confess it to Him, and ask Him to account you worthy to escape all forces of temptation, and all calamities that are, or are to be, consequent on sin; or as the Revised Version has the text: "Make supplication that you may prevail to escape," every evil of ungodliness, whether already wrought in the callousness of your heart, or in a weakness of character growing out of self-love, or in the fearful sorrows that are to be experienced on Christ's rejection of your undying soul in the judgment day. (*Dr. Trumbull.*) *Watching*:—I. WATCH OVER YOUR OUTGOINGS (Mark vii. 20). II. WATCH OVER THE INCOMINGS. See to it that mind and heart are ever filled with such suggestions as can carry the stamp of Christ's approval. III. WATCH OVER YOUR SURROUNDINGS. Your life has to be lived in the midst of hindering difficulties and influences. Then understand your life. Know the power of your circumstances. IV. WATCH OVER YOUR OPPORTUNITIES. You will have opportunities (1) of growing in grace; (2) of showing faithfulness to your Lord; (3) of serving Him in your daily sphere. (*The Weekly Pulpit.*) *Watching*:—I. ITS PECULIAR CHARACTER. The very quintessence of all faith; the very reason why faith is necessary for the true life. The soul in which burns the light of faith looks forward, and by looking forward is helped to step forward, expecting some strange yet true results. The will is strengthened to assert itself, sometimes on ventures which appear without foundation, but which are based upon the reality of what is to come. So the Christian can go forward with confidence and security. 1. From the call of Abraham to the present day, the supreme attitude of God's children has been that of expectancy. 2. Just as the Israelites looked for the first coming of the Messiah, so Christians look for the second coming in power and great glory. II. THE ESSENTIAL BENEFITS OF WATCHING. 1. It is a power which, though often latent and unobserved, is still a power of incalculable force. The unknown reserve of spiritual influence which lies at the root of the sincerely Christian character. 2. The watcher is always ready. No haziness about life, or uncertainty about its aims. (*Anon.*) *Watchfulness*:—See that sentry at the gate of an encampment or a fortress—mark his measured tread, his martial port, his anxious though determined countenance—his quiet and searching glance, as he repeats his constant walk—that soldier is awake; but he is more—he is upon his guard—his mind is full of his important trust—he feels the weight of his responsibility. But see—his frame becomes relaxed, his form grows less erect, his movements lose their regular mechanical succession—his look is vacant or abstracted, he no longer looks afar off and at hand in search of approaching danger, he has either forgotten it, or ceased to reckon it so imminent. And yet the man is wide awake; not only are his eyes still open, but they see surrounding objects; all his senses are still active, and his mind, though distracted from his present duty, is as much at work as ever; for no sooner does the slightest sound arouse him, than, as if by magic, he recovers his position and the tension of his muscles, he resumes his measured walk, his mingled air of circumspection and defiance, and his look of bold but anxious scrutiny. Even before, he was awake; but now he is awake and at the same time on his guard. Precisely the same difference exists between a simple wakefulness in spiritual matters—a wakefulness of understanding, conscience, and affection, and the active exercise of spiritual vigilance; this is impossible without the other, but the other does not necessarily involve this. In both cases, that is, in the literal and spiritual case supposed, there is a sensible gradation of remissness or the opposite. We have seen the sentry wholly losing for a moment the recollection of his solemn trust; but this is not the only way in which he may unconsciously betray it. Look at him again. Every look, every motion, now betokens concentration of his thoughts and feelings on the danger which impends, and against which he is set to watch. Perhaps he is now motionless, but it is only that his eye may be more steadfastly fixed upon the point from which the enemy's approach is apprehended. In that point his whole being seems to be absorbed. And you can see at a glance that he is ready, even for the first and faintest intimation of a moving object on that dim horizon. But while he stands like a statue, with his face turned towards that dreaded point, look beyond him and behind him, at those forms which are becoming every moment more and more defined against the opposite quarter

of the heavens. He hears them not, because their step is noiseless; he sees them not, because his eye and all his faculties are employed in an opposite direction. While he strains every sense to catch the first intimations of approaching danger, it is creeping stealthily behind him, and when at last his ear distinguishes the tramp of armed men, it is too late, for a hostile hand is already on his shoulder, and if his life is spared, it is only to be overpowered and disarmed without resistance. And yet that soldier was not only awake, but on his guard—his whole being was absorbed in contemplation of the danger which impended; but, alas, he viewed it as impending only from one quarter, and lost sight of it as really approaching from another. We may even suppose that he was right in looking where he did, and only wrong in looking there exclusively. There was an enemy to be expected from that quarter, and if this had been the only one, the sentry's duty would have been successfully performed; but he was not aware, or had forgotten, that the danger was a complex one—that while the enemy delayed his coming, another might be just at hand, and thus the very concentration of his watchfulness on one point defeated its own purpose, by withdrawing his attention from all others. By a slight shifting in the scene, I might present to you the same man or another, gazing not at one point only, but at all; sweeping the whole visible horizon with his eye as he maintains his martial vigil. See with what restless activity his looks pass from one distant point to another, as if resolved that nothing shall escape him, that no imaginable source of danger shall remain unwatched. That man might seem to be in every sense awake and on his guard—surprise might seem to be impossible—but hark! what sound is that which suddenly disturbs him in his solitary vigils? he looks hastily around him, but sees nothing, yet the sound is growing every moment louder and more distinct; “a voice of noise from the city”—“the voice of them that shout for mastery”—“the voice of them that cry for being overcome”! Doubt is no longer possible—it is—it is behind him—yes, the enemy for whom he looked so vigilantly, is within the walls, and the banner which he thought to have seen waving at a distance, is floating in triumph just above his head. The cases which I have supposed are not mere appeals to your imagination. They are full of instruction as to practical realities. They vividly present to us in figurative forms the actual condition of the soul in reference to spiritual dangers. (*J. A. Alexander, D.D.*)

Before the Son of Man.—*Before the Son of Man*:—I. RIGID REQUIREMENTS OF HIS STANDARD. 1. Consecration. Implies self-surrender. The doctrine of the Cross lies at the threshold of Christian living. 2. Purity. Involves thought of the heart, speech, actions. 3. Non-resistance. “Overcome evil with good.” This is the law of the New Testament, though not of nations or of the world. 4. Forgiveness of injury. Goes beyond passive indifference. Exacts positive affection. II. DUTY OF STANDING BEFORE HIM. Every time we hear the gospel, we “stand before the Son of Man.” Every time we witness His ordinances, we are brought face to face with Him. How? Either condemned or justified. Christ is the great Refiner of men. It is our duty to stand before Him. 1. Because His is the only perfect standard. He makes no mistakes. 2. Because it is the only way to secure His favour. Once men put Him on trial; now the order is reversed. He demands that every man be put to the test, to show his quality. To refuse to submit to Christ's judgment, is to confess cowardice. 3. Because by this we reach our proper place. The scientific principle is here applied. It is a species of “natural selection”—“the survival of the fittest.” Conclusion: To stand before the Son of Man implies—1. Your life in harmony with His. 2. Watching and prayer. 3. His favour and divinest blessing. (*H. S. Lobingier.*)

Vers. 37, 38. The Mount of Olives.—*Contemplations on Olivet*:—It will not be difficult to conceive how our Lord passed this sleepless night on the Mount of Olives. I. NIGHT FOREBODINGS OVER THE DOOM OF THE CITY WHICH HAD REJECTED HIM. Can we wonder that His thoughts that night were sad? Meet the facts fully and attentively, of—1. Christ's grief over the apostate city. 2. Christ's grief over the doomed city. He knew the inseparable connection between sinning against Christ and impending doom. II. NIGHT REFLECTIONS UPON HIS PROPHECIES WHICH FORESHADOWED THE END. Desecration of the Holy City; slaughter and dispersion of God's people; dire international struggles; decadence of faith, &c. III. NIGHT ANTICIPATIONS OF THE CLOSING EVENTS OF HIS EARTHLY CAREER. He clearly read each incident of His nearing anguish, and He carefully confronted it all. Nothing could

divert Him from His goal. **IV. NIGHT PREPARATION FOR THE SURRENDER TO HIS NEARING DEATH.** 1. Why this readiness to meet death? He would save others; not Himself. 2. For whom this readiness to die? For false friends and hating foes. (*W. H. Jellie.*) *Work and prayer*:—The life of the Lord Jesus on earth was a true human life; and it is only as we fully recognize this fact that we can find in it an example for our guidance. Here is a brief but instructive record of one important portion of His ministry on earth—itself a type of His whole course. The day was given to work—the evening to quiet rest, meditation, and prayer. Both were necessary to the fulfilment of His mission, and both are essential to the completeness of our Christian character. Here are two elements of Christian excellence, apparently apposite, yet both must be blended in one who would attain to the fulness of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. Many have tried, are trying, to separate them. There have been ages, there are still individuals and parties in whom there is an excess of the devotional—an excess, because it is to the exclusion of the active part. Man can never pray too often or too earnestly; but if his whole ideas of religious duty be confined to the reading of so-called spiritual books, the attendance on the public worship of God, or the performance of certain acts of private devotion—if the whole time that is not spent thus is regarded as something removed from the sphere of religion—if the ordinary work of the world be looked on as something that is fitted to lower the tone of the soul, and to interfere with spiritual earnestness—if even active service for Christ be depreciated, then the true character of a Christian life is altogether forgotten. There is the opposite danger, and it is perhaps that into which we are most prone to fall. Ours is the age of activity—from every side come to the Christian calls for earnest labour, for the overthrow of error, for the enlightening of ignorance, for the diffusion of the Gospel, for the relief of suffering and poverty, for the advancement of the numberless institutions which seek the advancement of Christ's kingdom. Demands of this character are incessant; and if obedience to them be the whole of our religion—if such engagements prevent heart-searching, God-seeking, quiet meditation, and earnest prayer—if they draw us away from that self-communion which is the true prelude to communion with God—if all is bustle, excitement, outward struggle, there is sure to be weakness. **I. It will not need much argument to prove that ACTIVE LABOURS FOR CHRIST ARE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF CHRISTIAN DUTY.** The life of Christ is the model for all true human lives. In the perfection of His self-sacrifice, in His readiness for all kinds of service, in His eagerness to search out opportunities for blessing man, in His indifference to every motive or feeling that would have held Him back in His ministry of love—in the resolve so early announced, that He must be about His Father's business, our great Master inspires and guides us. His own teachings indicate clearly that His followers are not to be recluses dwelling apart from their kind, but men taking their place in the world's associations and movements, that they may affect them for good. They are the salt of the earth, and that salt must be applied to the mass which it is to season and preserve, else where were its value? Surely it argues no want of charity to say that all these pleas argue an absence of true love to Christ. Men complain of want of opportunities, want of adaptation, want of intellect, when their one grand deficiency is want of heart. Love will quicken languid feelings, multiply the few talents, ennoble that which else were mean, breathe courage into trembling hearts, and make the foolish wise to win souls. Difficulties that to sluggards seem insuperable, will but stimulate its ardour and reveal its strength. **II. THE CHRISTIAN MAN MUST HAVE HIS TIMES FOR RETIREMENT AND PRAYER.** This is the other lesson taught by the brief record of the last week of our Lord's ministry on earth. Now as the crisis draws near and the cross is in immediate prospect, still more does His spirit crave that retirement in which, with strong crying and tears, He can make His supplication to His heavenly Father. To us the spectacle is alike sublime and mysterious, yet full of instruction. The glories which belong to the God cannot make us forget that He has become in all respects like to us, and that as our elder brother He teaches us our need, and shows us where we must seek for strength and succour. For we, too, need our times of rest for meditation, self-examination, and prayer. Soul and body in this follow the same law. Science tells us, and experience confirms the truth, that food is not more needful for the body than rest. Want of sleep will exhaust and kill as well as want of food. So with the soul. Asleep in the full sense it ought never to be, but rest, cessation of conflict, labour, and trial, it does need. Constant excitement, unrelaxing toil, unceasing struggle, would have the same effect on it as on the body. We feel, in our bodily life, need for even more than the

night of sleep. Who can tell the blessing to the world, even as a mere physical good, of the Christian Sabbath? Our Good Shepherd knows our need, and therefore He has still waters to which He leads His flock—"waters of restings," where our spirits, exhausted by work or warfare, may find the refreshment they require. He calls us, therefore, to rest and prayer, that we may find the "renewing of the Holy Ghost." Thus the earnest worker is prepared to be the most importunate pleader with God, and the fervent prayer, in its turn, fills the soul with the inspiration of a burning zeal and the confidence of an assured faith. (*J. G. Rogers, B.A.*)

CHAPTER XXII.

VERS. 1, 2. Sought how they might kill Him.—*The conspiracy against Christ*:—This chapter gives us a sad and sorrowful relation of the chief priests' conspiracy against the life of our blessed Saviour; in which we have three particulars observable: 1. The persons making this conspiracy, the chief priests, scribes, and elders; that is, the whole Jewish sanhedrim, or general council; they all lay their malicious heads together, to contrive the destruction of the holy and innocent Jesus. Thence learn, that general councils have erred, and may err fundamentally, both in matters of doctrine and practice; they did not believe Jesus to be the Messias, after all the miracles wrought before their eyes, but ignominiously put Him to death. 2. The manner of this conspiracy against the life of our blessed Saviour; it was clandestine, secret, and subtle. They consulted how they might take Him by craft, and put Him to death. Learn thence, that Satan makes use of the subtlety of crafty men, and abuseth their parts as well as their power for his own purposes and designs: the devil never sends a fool on his errand. 3. The circumstance of time when this conspiracy was managed, at the feast of the passover. (*W. Burkitt.*)

Vers. 3-6. Then entered Satan into Judas.—*Progressive wickedness*:—Men do not become great villains at once. Souls are not like meteoric bodies, that are blazing amongst the stars at one moment, and the next in some dark pit on earth, wrapped in a noxious and sulphurous smoke. They are rather like trees, they fall by degrees. See that great monarch of the forest! For years disease has been in its roots, and a long succession of foul insects have been gnawing at its vitals. Slowly and silently the decline goes on. At first the outward symptoms are scarcely visible. A few withered leaves on one of its branches on a certain spring are first noticed by the old woodman. The next spring, and not only withered leaves are seen, but perhaps a leafless branch or two. Thus through many a long year the deterioration proceeds, until at last it is rotten to the core, and only awaits some slight breeze blowing in the right direction to strike it down. One morning a gentle gust of air sweeps through the wood, the tree falls with a crash that shakes its neighbours, vibrates through the forest, and appals the district with its boom.

Vers. 7-13. Go and prepare us the passover.—*Preparation for the Last Supper*:—Passover just at hand. Day of preparation. The Lamb to be offered is Himself. "Go and prepare—get ready—for Me; let it be heart-preparation." 1. This preparation was general. All Old Testament teachings, histories, prophecies, and events were a preparation for the death on the cross. "Go, prepare to meet Me around that table of commemoration." 2. When, or at what time, concerned the disciples. Your time to prepare is *now*. 3. The character of this command. Imperative. "Go." Now Grotius, who lived to be fifty before he made this preparation, said, "I have passed the whole of my life laboriously doing nothing." Cast away your sins, your prayerlessness. "I have lost ten years; I give the rest to Jesus," should be the resolution of youth. 4. You will need to carry nothing in there. The feast is prepared. (*S. H. Tyng, D.D.*) *Preparation for the Lord's Supper*:—Part of the preparation for the Lord's Supper consists in learning about Christ. Unless we know Him we cannot remember Him. If we know little about Him our remembrance of Him will be poor and shallow. Suppose you were asked to do

something, to illuminate your house or to plant a tree, in remembrance of some one of whom you had never heard—Bocchoris, for instance—you might do it; but what sense would there be in your doing it? You know nothing about him. What you did would be a mere external and formal observance. If I told you that according to Manetho he was the only monarch belonging to the twenty-fourth dynasty of Egyptian kings, he would still be nothing more than a name to you. Was he a good king or a bad king? Did he build temples, pyramids, great public works, make canals, establish wise and beneficent laws, fight famous battles, contribute to the civilization and happiness of his people, or did he do nothing? Was his reign long and glorious? Was he remembered after his death with love and honour? Or was his memory execrated? You don't know; I believe no one knows. His name stands in a list of ancient kings, that is all we can say, and to do anything in remembrance of him would be an unmeaning ceremony. Remembrance must be based on knowledge, and the richer our knowledge the more vivid is our remembrance. When there is to be any public celebration of a great man, when a statue is to be erected or a building opened in his honour, the newspapers tell us about his life, and about what he did for the country; and speeches are delivered to recall the grounds on which his memory deserves to be perpetuated. And so a large part of the proper preparation for the Lord's Supper consists in learning all we can know about the Lord Jesus Christ. The four Gospels are the best preparation for the service. (*R. W. Dale.*) *The last passover* :—I. CHRIST'S DESIRE TO EAT THE PASSOVER. This in another place is expressed in the strongest terms (Luke xxii. 15). Now, this he might do for the following reasons: 1. It was the Lord's passover, so called in Exod. xii. 11. 2. Hereby he gave an undeniable proof, that He was made under the ceremonial as well as moral law. 3. This was His last passover, and had an immediate relation to His subsequent sufferings. 4. The company with which He was to eat the passover, and the gospel ordinance He was about to institute in its room, might increase the ardour of His desire. Hence those tender words: "I shall eat the passover with My disciples." II. NOTICE THE PLACE IN WHICH CHRIST WOULD EAT THIS PASSOVER. Not in Herod's, or the High Priest's palace; for He who took upon Him the form of a servant, did not affect state and grandeur. Not in the magnificent dwelling of a Roman officer, or Jewish ruler, where He might be attended with a numerous retinue of servants; He came not to be ministered to, but to minister. Now this may be considered as emblematical—1. Of the gospel Church. 2. It may resemble the renewed and sanctified heart. "Commune with your own heart" (Psa. iv. 4). "Enter into your own chamber" (Heb.) The furnished room may also resemble a heart endowed with all the gifts, and adorned with all the graces of the Spirit. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*)

Vers. 14-20. With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you.—*The last passover*—Christ's desire for it :—"This passover before I suffer!" It tells us, surely, that there was some connection between the passover and the suffering of Christ, and a special connection in this passover at which He and His disciples were now sitting down. Let us think of some of the reasons why the Saviour desired so earnestly to join in this last passover before He suffered. 1. One reason was, that the passover had now reached its end, and found its full meaning. The ancient covenant, which changed the slaves of Egypt into God's servants, gives place to the new, which changes his servants into His sons, and commences that golden chain, "If children, then heirs: heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ," &c. And here, too, are the means of the redemption. The passover, which sprinkled with the blood of the covenant the door-posts in the land of Egypt, descends until its last victim dies beneath the shadow of the cross of Christ. Its efficacy is gone, for He has appeared who is to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, and to bring in an everlasting righteousness. At best it was a shadow, but now the great reality has come, "Christ our passover, sacrificed for us." It is no unconscious victim, but one who freely gives Himself, the just for the unjust, that He may bring us to God. 2. Another reason why Christ desired to be present at this passover was, for the support of His own soul in the approaching struggle. "Before I suffer!" He had a terrible conflict to meet, for which He longed, and at which He trembled. We may feel startled at the thought that the Son of God should be dependent on such aid at such a moment. And yet it is in keeping with all His history—with the whole plan of redemption. The Divine and human are inseparably interwoven in the life and work of Christ. 3. We are led naturally to this further reason—that Christ desired to be present at the last passover because His friends needed special

comfort. "To eat this passover with you before I suffer." He desired to make His converse with them at this passover in the upper chamber a strength and consolation to them against the sore temptations they were to encounter. And may we not believe that Christ still prepares His people for what may be lying before them, and that He employs His comforts "to prevent" them—to go before them—in the day of their calamity. When darkness is about to fall, God has lamps to put into the hand by anticipation. He who made His ark go before His ancient people in all their wanderings, causes the consolations of His Word to smooth the way of them that look to Him. He knows what painful steps are before us in the journey of life, what privations, what bereavements—it may be that the most solemn step of all must ere long be taken—and He desires to eat this passover with us "before we suffer." 4. The last reason we give for Christ's desire to be present at this passover is, that it looked forward to all the future of His Church and people. At the close of the last passover, Christ instituted that communion of the Supper which has come down through many generations—which goes forth into all the world as the remembrance of His death and the pledge of the blessings it has purchased for us. How frail this little ark which His hand has sent out on those stormy waters, but how safely it has carried its precious freight! And this presence of His, at the first communion, looks still further—on to the period when, instead of His Spirit, we shall have Himself. He desired to take His place in person at the first communion in our world, and when the great communion opens in heaven, He shall be seen in His place once more. (*J. Ker, D.D.*) *The Lord's Supper*.—We need not look for great things in order to discover great truths. To those who reach after God he will reveal his deepest secrets through things insignificant in themselves, within the routine of common lives. No event occurs more regularly than the daily meal. None, perhaps, gathers around it so many pleasant associations. Its simplest possible form, in Christ's time, consisted in eating bread and drinking a cup of wine. Into this act, one evening, He gathered all the meaning of the ancient sacrifices; all sacred and tender relations between Himself and His followers, and all the prophecies of His perfected kingdom. I. THE PREPARATION. "They made ready the passover." Note concerning the making ready that—1. It was deliberate. The room was selected and secured. The hour was appointed. Two of the disciples were chosen to prepare the lamb and to spread the table. The Lord's Supper is not less, but far more, rich in meaning than was the ancient passover. It requires the preparation of mind and heart made by private meditation, and by the gathering together beforehand of disciples for prayer, conference, and instruction. 2. It was exclusive. "I shall eat the passover," Christ said, "with My disciples." No others were invited, because no others were fitted to share in the ceremony which He was to inaugurate. 3. It was familiar. He drew closer to His disciples as the time approached in which He was to teach them how to celebrate His great act for the redemption of the world. Such times must be cherished as the warm, spring hours of spiritual growth. 4. It was solemn. The shadow of the greatest tragedy in the world's history, close at hand, hung over them, as they went through the silent streets to the prepared guest chamber. His manner, His words, His actions, were filled with the consciousness of it. II. THE BETRAYER POINTED OUT. 1. It leads each true disciple to self-examination. 2. It helps to reveal to Himself the false disciple. Judas knew that he was out of place in that upper chamber. The Lord's table, which symbolizes the most intimate fellowship with Him, is a means of leading selfish men to begin to realize the awful and utter loneliness of sin. 3. It helps us to realize the baseness of a false confession of Christ. III. THE SUPPER INSTITUTED. 1. A new sacrifice. Oxen, sheep, and doves had for centuries been slain as a sign that through life offered in sacrifice, human life that had been forfeited by sin might be restored. But from that night the broken bread takes the place of all these, and represents to us the body of Christ given as a sacrifice for sinners. 2. A new covenant. 3. A new kingdom, which was begun when first Christ through the Holy Spirit began to rule in one human heart. (*A. E. Dunning.*) *The happiness of attending The Communion*.—During the sunshine of his prosperity, Napoleon I. thought little of God and religious duties. But when his power had been broken, and he was an exile at St. Helena, he began to see the vanity of earthly things, and became earnest and attentive to religion. Then it was that he returned a very remarkable answer to one who asked him what was the happiest day in his life. "Sire," said his questioner, "allow me to ask you what was the happiest day in all your life? Was it the day of your victory at Lodi? at Jena? at Austerlitz? or was it when you were crowned emperor?" No.

my good friend, replied the fallen emperor, "it was none of these. It was the day of my first communion! That was the happiest day in all my life!" *Sacramental service*:—I. HOW INTENSE THE SAVIOUR'S LOVE FOR US MUST HAVE BEEN, in that His desire was not extinguished by the knowledge that it was to be His death-feast. II. HOW CLOSE HIS FELLOWSHIP WITH MEN, as shown in that He desired to spend such an hour in their company. III. HOW EAGER THE MASTER WAS TO MAKE THE DISCIPLES REALIZE THE NEARNESS OF THE HEAVENLY BLESSING HE WOULD PURCHASE FOR THEM, and to give them a pledge of it for their assurance. "I will not eat any more thereof, until it be fulfilled," &c. The Lord's Supper, then instituted, is thus designed to be—1. An evidence of Christ's undying love. 2. An assurance of His intimate fellowship. 3. A confirmation of His promise of the everlasting blessedness. (*Anon.*) *The Last Supper*:—I. THE PASSOVER PREPARED. This preparation is suggestive of three things. 1. The dispensation in which Christ and His apostles still were. 2. The all-comprehensive knowledge possessed by Christ. 3. That in the midst of enemies Christ still had friends in Jerusalem. II. THE PASSOVER EATEN. 1. Our Lord's punctuality (ver. 14). 2. Our Lord's intense desire in respect to this passover. (1) Because the last He would celebrate with them. (2) Because He would impress them with the connection between Himself as God's Lamb, and the paschal lamb. (3) Because He would awaken in them an intense desire for His second coming, when He would sit down with them in the Kingdom of God. III. THE PASSOVER SUPERSEDED. 1. By the establishment of an ordinance which commemorates the true passover (see 1 Cor. v. 7). 2. By the assurance of the better hope which this ordinance affirms (Heb. vii. 19-22). 3. By the emblematic re-crucifixion of our Lord, which should inspire them to a constant remembrance of His personal love for them (1 Cor. xi. 24). Lessons: 1. Retrospection essential. (1) Bread broken. (2) Wine poured out. 2. Introspection essential (1 Cor. xi. 28). 3. Prospection essential (1 Cor. xi. 26). (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*)

The cup of suffering and of Communion:—I. THAT COMMUNION BETWEEN CHRIST AND BELIEVERS WILL BE RENEWED IN HEAVEN. Even on this side heaven, seasons of pure spiritual communion are not denied us. This exhausts the Saviour's idea. His words are to be taken not literally, but spiritually. The wine is put for the thing represented—the joys and the felicities of the final state, and to drink the wine new with Him is to partake the inmost pleasure of His soul. II. THIS COMMUNION WILL BE PERFECT AND UNMIXED. We receive only in part; and this necessarily renders every act of communion imperfect. But in heaven it will be otherwise. Our nature will be so purified and transformed, as that every power and every property will be an avenue to convey the stream of life and glory into the soul. The fellowship will be that of perfected spirits. There will be no darkness in the understanding, no error in the judgment, no guilt in the conscience, no sin in the heart. III. THIS COMMUNION WILL BE UNINTERRUPTED AND ETERNAL. Sublime and refreshing as are the seasons of spiritual joy which we experience on earth, they are, generally speaking, but of short duration. Here perpetuity of enjoyment is impossible, but there it is certain. The union between the Saviour and the soul will never be dissolved, and therefore the fellowship will never end. Here we are overtaken by fatigue and exhaustion, but there we shall be endowed with immortal vigour; here sickness and infirmity often intervene, but there the inhabitants shall never say they are sick; here we enjoy communion at intervals, there it will be eternal. IV. THIS COMMUNION WILL BE HEIGHTENED BY THE PRESENCE AND THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE WHOLE REDEEMED CHURCH. It is no common joy which we experience even in the most private communion; but this joy is heightened when we can blend with other souls in harmony with our own. What, then, must be the communion of the coming world, where we shall hold immediate fellowship not only with God and the Redeemer, but at the same moment, and in the same act, with angels and the whole Church of the redeemed? Delightful is the union and fellowship of minds on earth! When heart communes with heart it is like the mingling dew-drops on the flower. But this union will be heightened in heaven. There we shall find none but kindred minds, with which it will be impossible not to unite. The blessedness of the future world is in reserve for those only who belong to the kingdom of God on earth. Into the heavenly communion none will be received, but those who have here held fellowship with a risen and glorified Saviour. (*R. Ferguson, LL.D.*) *He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it.—The Holy Communion*:—I. HOLY COMMUNION—WHAT IS IT? 1. It is Christ's own ordinance. Being a communicant is the test of the reality of your Christian profession. 2. It is the command of the Great Master. *Emphatic,*

plain, straightforward, definite. A test of our faithfulness as the servants of Christ. 3. It is the dying wish of the best of Friends. You cannot disregard it, and be true to Him. 4. Its great importance is taught plainly by the teaching and practice of the early Church. It was at first the only act of united worship. And it was celebrated at least every Lord's Day. II. WHAT IS ITS NATURE? 1. It is a memorial. A picture for all time of Christ's body broken and blood shed for the sins of man. (1) A memorial to God the Father. In our prayers we say, "through Jesus Christ our Lord"; or some such words; i.e., we plead before the Father what He has done for us. In the Holy Communion we say, "for Jesus' sake" not in words, but in the very acts which He Himself has taught us. Thus it is our highest act of prayer. (2) A memorial to ourselves. How easily we forget. This refreshes our memory, and rekindles our love. (3) A memorial to an unthinking or unbelieving world. A witness to men that we believe in Jesus, who lived and died and still lives for us. 2. It is a means of grace. Jesus Himself is pleased in this ordinance of his own appointment to give us Himself. 3. It is a bond of union between ourselves and others. In partaking together one sacred food we, made one with Jesus, are brought nearer to one another. (1) A bond of union between those who belong to the same earthly family. (2) A bond of union between those who belong to the same congregation. (3) A bond of union between all Christians who love the Lord Jesus. (4) A bond of union between those who are resting in paradise. III. WHO OUGHT TO COME? 1. Those who know how poor their love is, and want to love God more. 2. Those who are trying to serve God, and fail because they are weak, and need strength. 3. Those who are sinful, but desire to become holy. 4. Those who are careful and troubled about many things, and long for rest. IV. WHO OUGHT NOT TO COME? 1. Those who are sinning, and do not want to give up their sin. 2. Those who think themselves good enough. The self-satisfied obtain no blessing, for they seek none. V. HOW TO COME. 1. Humbly. Why? Because we are not worthy to come. 2. Trustingly and simply. Taking God at His word, and not asking questions. 3. Earnestly. Meaning what we are doing. Not because others come, but because we realize that in our sinfulness and our unworthiness we find the strongest reason why we ought to come. 4. Reverently. Humbly realizing the presence of Jesus, and earnestly desiring His blessing. 5. Regularly. Have a fixed rule about it. Do not leave it to be done at any time when it is convenient or suits you. 6. More and more frequently. As you grow older you ought to be more earnest, and in order to serve God better you must seek more help. The grown-up man is not content with the same amount of food as the child; and the man who is desirous to grow up into the full measure of the stature of Christ, needs more spiritual nourishment than the man who is only a babe in Christ. 7. Early. When your thoughts are fresh, your heart free from cares and worries, your mind undisturbed by worldly things. Give to God the best you can. Let Him have the first of the day. (C. J. Ridgeway, M.A.)

The Holy Communion.—I. THE ORDINANCE ITSELF. II. ITS CHARACTERISTICS. 1. A Divine ordinance. 2. A perpetual ordinance. 3. A binding and obligatory ordinance. 4. It should be a frequent ordinance. No Lord's Day without the Lord's Supper. III. THE SPIRIT IN WHICH IT SHOULD BE OBSERVED. 1. Deep humility of mind. 2. Grateful love to Jesus. 3. Faith. 4. Love to all mankind. 5. Joyous hope. IV. THE ADVANTAGES ARISING FROM OBEDIENCE TO THIS COMMAND OF CHRIST'S. 1. The soul will be strengthened. 2. Christ will be increasingly precious. 3. Holiness will be increased. 4. Heaven will be desired. Application: 1. Address regular communicants. Come in a right spirit. Be watchful, humble, prayerful, &c. 2. Address irregular communicants. Why so? It is disobedience, inconsistency, injurious to yourselves, Church, world. 3. Those who never commune at all. (1) The conscientiously doubtful. Do you hate sin? Believe in Christ, &c. Are you willing to obey him? Then draw near, &c. (2) Those who are really unfit for the Lord's table, are also unfit for death, judgment, eternity. (J. Burns, D.D.)

The Sacrament of Holy Communion.—In preserving this festival, we are urged alike by affection and duty. I. THE ACT. 1. To stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, we may point out the simplicity of this act. 2. But though simple it is significant. The material forms and visible things, represent spiritual and invisible realities. 3. The participation of this Sacrament is a manifestation of Christian unity (1 Cor. x. 16, 17). 4. This act is commemorative. 5. This ordinance is also sealing. A pledge of Divine mercy. A covenant act. 6. This Sacrament is also prospective. "Till He come." II. THE COMMAND. "This do." 1. Unanimously. 2. Frequently. 3. Gratefully. 4. Reverently. 5. Worthily.

"Discerning the Lord's Body." (R. M. Willcox.) *The Lord's Supper*:—The Lord's Supper—what a title! How full of memories, how it carries us back into the very heart of the past! What a solemn night it tells of—what a meeting—what a parting! The Lord's Supper, however often it is celebrated, always ought to carry us back to the institution. For the little company of the disciples it was a night of gloom. The week had opened amid Hosannas; for a moment it had seemed as if the Saviour was to be the hero and the idol of the multitude. But the acclaims died away. The bitter hostility of the rulers reasserted itself in a series of angry or crafty assaults; and now we are on the very eve of that other and most opposite cry—"Away with Him; crucify Him. His blood be on us, and on our children." The fortunes of the new gospel, as man must judge, were that night at the very lowest ebb. As the event advances it is made quite evident that this is a parting meeting, and that the Lord and Master knows it. He speaks of Himself as departing, not on a temporary journey, but by a violent death. People who are bent upon explaining away everything that is remarkable, still more everything that is superhuman in the Gospels, have denied that the words "Take, eat, this is My Body; Drink ye all of this, for this is My Blood," were words of institution at all. They say that they were merely a pathetic way of typifying to the disciples His approaching death, and had nothing to do with any future commemoration of it when He should be gone. It is not necessary to argue this point, because we have the clearest testimony from the earliest date rationally possible; the testimony of friends and foes; of Christians and Pagans; of St. Paul and St. Luke; of Pliny no less than Justin Martyr, that those who heard the words did understand them as words of institution, and did act upon them as such. The breaking of the bread, the coming together to eat the Lord's Supper were phrases of perpetual recurrence as soon as there was any Church founded, and wherever that Church spread itself over Asia and Europe; and that custom, always, and everywhere, explained itself by going back to the scene in the guest-chamber the night before the Crucifixion. But now, if the words had this meaning, the thought comes upon us with great force, how wonderful is it that our Lord, knowing that this was His last night upon earth as a man in flesh and blood, instead of regarding it as an end, looks upon it as a beginning, speaks of it as a preliminary, a necessary preliminary to results foreseen and foreknown, in particular to what He calls the remission or dismissal of sins, and gives directions for the perpetual remembrance of His approaching baptism of blood, in an ordinance which is to have for its marked feature the symbolic eating and drinking of His own Body and Blood. Brethren, this is a great thought. Our Lord in the same night in which He was betrayed, the very night before He suffered, did not look upon that betrayal or upon that passion as a disaster, as a blow struck at His work, or His enterprise, but rather as its necessary condition. It is the fore-ordained consummation. The same night in which He was betrayed, and in the clearest foresight of His Crucifixion, He founds an ordinance, He institutes a sacrament in express recognition, and for the everlasting remembrance, of His death of violence and torture, of ignominy and agony. Well, now let us pass on to the very words of the institution, so much more surprising and startling than if they had merely spoken of commemorating His death—"Take, eat, this is My Body"; "Drink ye all of this, for this is My blood." It would not have been at all startling, and not at all surprising, if our Lord had bidden His disciples to come together from time to time to meditate upon His cruel and suffering death. A mere man might have thought of this, might even have made it a religious service to go over the particulars of His passion, partly as a memorial to a lost friend, and partly for the encouragement of serious, devout, and humble living. But this cannot be said of the expressions before us—"Take, eat, this is My Body." "Drink this, for it is My Blood." So far from this being the common language of a dying friend, it was language of which all would shrink from the hearing or the uttering. Brethren, it speaks for itself, that they must have regarded Him who said, "Take, eat, this is My Body," as one altogether different from any common, or any merely human person. It would be cruelty, it would be impiety, it would be insanity in any friend, living or dying, to use such expressions concerning himself. They say this, if they say anything, "My death shall be your life;" "My body is given, My blood is outpoured for you." In that death is involved the life of the world. In that separation of flesh and blood which is the act of dying, the sins of the world are taken away; yet this is not as a single isolated fact just to be accepted, just to be relied upon, without corollary or consequence—not so. "I, the dying, the once dead, shall be alive again after

death, and be your life, not as a dead man, but as one alive after death; so must you deal with Me. You must receive Me into your hearts, you must, as it were, eat Me and drink Me, so that I may enter into your very being, and become a part of you; not as a man in human form treading upon the earth, accompanying with you as a man with his friends, but in a totally different manner, as one that died and was dead, but who now liveth to die no more; as one that has died and risen again; as one that is now in heaven; as one that has the Holy Spirit, and sends Him forth for perpetual indwelling in the hearts of His people." So eat, so drink, for refreshing, and for sustentation, "The flesh profiteth nothing"; no, not though you could hold in the hand and press with the teeth the very body of the Crucified. The flesh, even the sacred flesh, profiteth nothing; "it is the Spirit that quickeneth." One moment of spiritual contact with the risen and glorified is worth whole centuries, whole millenniums, of the corporeal co-existence. (*Dean Vaughan.*)

The advantages of remembering Christ:—I. We are to inquire, first, WHAT IS IMPLIED IN REMEMBERING CHRIST. 1. There is evidently implied in this remembrance a knowledge of Him, a previous acquaintance with Him. He must have occupied much of our thoughts, have entered into our hearts, and been lodged in the deepest recesses of our minds. 2. Hence to remember Christ implies a heart-felt love for Him. 3. Hence to remember Christ implies also a frequent and affectionate recalling of Him to our minds. II. Let us proceed to inquire WHY CHRIST HAS LEFT US THIS COMMAND TO REMEMBER HIM. 1. He has done this for a reason which ought greatly to humble us. He has said, "Remember Me," because He knows that we are prone to forget Him. 2. But our proneness to forget Christ is not the only reason why He has commanded us to remember Him. He has given us this command, because He desires to be remembered by us. 3. The great reason, however, why Christ has commanded us to remember Him, is this—He knows that we cannot think of Him without deriving much benefit to ourselves. III. WHAT, THEN, ARE THE ADVANTAGES RESULTING FROM AN HABITUAL REMEMBRANCE OF JESUS? This is our third subject of inquiry; let us proceed to consider it. 1. The first of these benefits is comfort to the soul, when wounded by a sense of sin. 2. An habitual remembrance of Christ has a tendency also to elevate our affections. 3. This heavenly-mindedness would lead us to a third benefit resulting from this remembrance of Christ—patience and comfort in our afflictions. 4. The remembrance of Christ tends also to keep alive within us a holy hatred of sin. Nothing makes sin appear half so hateful, as the cross of Christ; nothing so effectually checks it when rising in the soul, as the thought of a dying Saviour. O let me never crucify the Son of God afresh! IV. BUT IF WE WOULD HABITUALLY REMEMBER CHRIST, LET US NOT FORGET THE COMMAND GIVEN US IN THE TEXT, "This do in remembrance of Me." We soon forget objects which are removed from our sight; and our Lord, who knows and pities this weakness of our nature, has given us an abiding memorial of Himself. He has appointed an ordinance for this very purpose, to remind us of His love. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *Christ wanting to be remembered*:—The Holy Communion is the memorial of our Redeemer's sacrifice.

I. CHRIST WANTS TO BE REMEMBERED FOR WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR US. We never must forget the past, or lose sight of Calvary. Great Prophet, we must ever think of what He has done to teach; Great Priest, what He has done to atone; and Great King, what He has done to win the allegiance and devotion of our hearts. II. OUR LORD WANTS TO BE REMEMBERED IN WHAT HE IS DOING FOR US. He lives to carry on and to carry out His work of grace in our hearts and lives. III. CHRIST WANTS TO BE REMEMBERED FOR WHAT HE IS UNDER PLEDGE TO DO. We anticipate the coronation of our King, and the marriage-supper of the Lamb. Veils hide Him now; we long for the vision of His face. (*R. Tuck, B.A.*) *The Holy feast*:—1. A feast of charity. 2. A feast of commemoration. 3. A feast of sanctified communion. 4. A feast of hope. (*J. B. Owen, M.A.*) *The Sacrament of Holy Communion*:—I. A DIRECTION FROM CHRIST—"Do this." 1. Addressed by our Lord (1) to the apostles, and (2) through them to the whole catholic Church. 2. Spoken as a Friend to His friends. 3. Spoken instructively. As our Prophet. 4. Spoken authoritatively. As our King, Christ expects us to keep this our military oath with Him. If an earthly commander had but to say to his servant, "go," and he went; and "come," and he came; how much more "ought we to be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?" "See then, oh believer, that ye refuse not Him who speaketh." Do not come to the Holy Table—(a) formally; (b) grudgingly, or of necessity. But come—(a) humbly; (b) reverently; (c) faithfully. II. AN EXPLANATORY MOTIVE—"In remembrance of Me." (*R. S. Brooke, M.A.*) *The cup*

of reconciliation:—Warburton and Tucker were contemporary bishop and dean in the same cathedral. For many years they were not even on speaking terms. It was on a Good Friday, not long before Warburton's death; they were at the Holy Table together. Before he gave the cup to the dean, he stooped down, and said in tremulous emotion, "Dear Tucker, let this be the cup of reconciliation between us." It had the intended effect; they were friends again to their mutual satisfaction. (*Christian Age*.)

The Lord's Supper:—I. THE INSTITUTION OF THIS HOLY RITE. "This do"—that is, do what I am doing. To do what Jesus did we are to take bread and wine. And we are to take this bread and wine, not for an ordinary meal—for they "had supped"; and St. Paul says, "If any hunger, let him eat at home,"—but for a sacramental feast, a means of feeding in our souls upon the Body and Blood of Christ our Saviour. Again, if we would do what Jesus did, we must, before we eat that bread and drink that wine, have them consecrated: "Jesus blessed"; and, as St. Paul says, "the cup of blessing which we bless." Next, we are to have a minister to consecrate them. We do not find that any disciples meeting together could consecrate the elements, for in Matthew we are told, that "Jesus blessed it and brake it, and then gave it to the disciples and said, Take, eat, this is My Body." Again we find, that in doing this, our Lord accompanied it with prayer.

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER—"do this in remembrance of Me." The remembrance of Jesus may be considered actively or passively—"this do in remembrance of Me"—that is, to remind Jesus of us, or to remind us of Jesus. The expression may be applied both ways, and may be profitably considered in either view. We have need of reminding Christ of us, of our necessities, our wants, our joys, and our sorrows, as in Isa. xliii. 26. In Numb. x. 9, we have the same truth of reminding God of us set before the Jews, and so again in Mal. iii. 16, 17. In this view of these words, we have then this truth set before us that, in that holy ordinance, we remind Jesus of His covenantal mercy, of His dying love, the price it cost Christ to purchase our souls, the greatness of His promises, the reality and truth of our faith in Him, the necessity we have to bring before Him our weakness and our woes. We remind Him that we do indeed believe in Him, and that, believing in Him, we cling to His precious covenant. In taking of the memorials of His dying love, we remind Him that we are those of whom He has said, "He that believeth on Me, though He were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die." But again, the remembrance of Jesus, taken passively, implies that we remember Jesus; our remembrance of Jesus implies, not merely a remembrance of one act of the Saviour, of one truth, or one fact connected with His gospel or His life, but a remembrance of Himself. He does not say, do it in remembrance of the cross—do it in remembrance of the garden, but, do it in remembrance of *Me*—My person—My offices—My qualities—My whole being—Christ Jesus our Redeemer—our Friend. Remembrance of Jesus must vary in intensity, and affection, and character, in proportion to our knowledge of His love, His grace, His kindness, and His truth, and of our habitual abiding in Him in our own souls.

III. WHO ARE THE PERSONS THAT OUGHT TO PARTAKE OF IT? IV. THE DUTY OF OBSERVING IT. It was given for disciples. (*J. Baylee, D.D.*) *The Lord's Supper an emblem and memorial*:—I. IT IS AN EMBLEM. The question is, then, what unseen things do these simple objects represent? 1. The human nature of Christ; His incarnation. 2. The death of Christ, too, is shadowed forth in this ordinance. We have more than bread before us in it, it is bread which has been broken; and more than wine, it is wine which has been poured forth. 3. The consecrated elements are emblematical also of the great end and design of our Lord's incarnation and death. II. Let us now go on to another view of this ordinance. IT IS A MEMORIAL. "This do," He says, "in remembrance of Me." But it is not Himself simply considered, that our Lord calls on us here to remember; it is Himself as these emblems set Him forth, given and bleeding for us; it is Himself in His humiliation, sufferings, and death. Why the institution of an ordinance to bring things like these to our remembrance? 1. Partly, perhaps, on account of the joy Christ Himself feels in the recollection of them. His heart overflows with joy at the thought of His cross and passion, and He would have us think of them and sympathize with Him in His joy. 2. The remembrance of Christ's incarnation and death is of the utmost importance to us; therefore also He may have established this memorial of them among us. "All our fresh springs" are in our crucified Lord, and therefore He brings Himself frequently before us as our crucified Lord that we may go to Him as the great source of our mercies, and take of His blessings. 3. There is another reason to be given for the setting up of this memorial of our Lord's sufferings—it is our liability to forget them. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*)

Christ's vicarious death:—A single verse, written on paper, now yellow with age, hangs on the wall of a nobleman's study in London. It has a remarkable history, and has, in two notable instances, at least, been blessed of God to conversion. The verse was originally composed by Dr. Valpy, the eminent Greek scholar and author of some standard school books. He was converted late in life, and wrote this verse as a confession of faith:—

“In peace let me resign my breath,
And Thy salvation see;
My sins deserve eternal death,
But Jesus died for me.”

On one occasion Dr. Marsh was visiting the house of Lord Roden, where he held a Bible reading with the family. He mentioned Dr. Valpy's conversion by way of illustration in the course of his remarks, and recited the verse. Lord Roden was particularly struck with the lines, wrote them out, and affixed them to the wall of his study, where they still are. Lord Roden's hospitable mansion was often full of visitors, among whom were many old army officers. One of these was General Taylor, who served with distinction under Wellington at Waterloo. He had not, at that time, thought much on the subject of religion, and preferred to avoid all discussion of it. But soon after the paper was hung up he went into the study to talk with his friend alone, and his eyes rested for a few moments upon the verse. Later in the day Lord Roden upon entering his study came upon the general standing before the paper and reading it with earnest face. At another visit the host noticed that whenever General Taylor was in the study his eyes rested on the verse. At length Lord Roden broke the ice by saying, “Why, General, you will soon know that verse by heart.” “I know it now by heart,” replied the general, with emphasis and feeling. A change came over the general's spirit and life. No one who was intimately acquainted with him could doubt its reality. During the following two years he corresponded readily with Lord Roden about the things which concerned his peace, always concluding his letters by quoting Dr. Valpy's verse. At the end of that time the physician who attended General Taylor wrote to Lord Roden to say that his friend had departed in peace, and that the last words which fell from his dying lips were those which he had learned to love in his lifetime. A young relative of the family, an officer who served in the Crimea, also saw it, but turned carelessly away. Some months later Lord Roden received the intelligence that his young acquaintance was suffering from pulmonary disease, and was desirous of seeing him without delay. As he entered the sick-room the dying man stretched out both hands to welcome him; at the same time repeating Dr. Valpy's simple lines. “They have been God's message,” he said, “of peace and comfort to my heart in this illness, when brought to my memory, after days of darkness and distress, by the Holy Ghost the Comforter.”

The ordained memorial:—I. THE MAIN OBJECT OF THE SUPPER IS A PERSONAL MEMORIAL. “In remembrance of Me.” We are to remember not so much His doctrines, or precepts, as His person. Remember the Lord Jesus at this Supper—1. As the trust of your hearts. 2. As the object of your gratitude. 3. As the Lord of your conduct. 4. As the joy of your lives. 5. As the Representative of your persons. 6. As the Rewarder of your hopes. Remember what He was, what He is, what He will be. Remember Him with heartiness, concentration of thought, realizing vividness, and deep emotion. II. THE MEMORIAL ITSELF IS STRIKING. 1. Simple, and therefore like Himself, who is transparent and unpretentious truth. Only bread broken, and wine poured out. 2. Frequent—“as oft as ye drink it,” and so pointing to our constant need. He intended the Supper to be often enjoyed. 3. Universal, and so showing the need of all. “Drink ye all of it.” In every land, all His people are to eat and drink at this table. 4. His death is the best memory of Himself, and it is by showing forth His death that we remember Him. 5. His covenant relation is a great aid to memory; hence He speaks of—“The new covenant in My Blood.” We do not forget Adam, our first covenant-head; nor can we forget our second Adam. 6. Our receiving Him is the best method of keeping Him in memory; therefore we eat and drink in this ordinance. No better memorial could have been ordained. III. THE OBJECT AIMED AT IS ITSELF INVITING. Since we are invited to come to the holy Supper that we may remember our Lord, we may safely infer that—1. We may come to it, though we have forgotten Him often and easily. In fact, this will be a reason for coming. 2. We may come, though others

may be forgetful of Him. We come not to judge them, but to remember Him ourselves. 3. We may come, though weak for aught else but the memory of His goodness. 4. It will be sweet, cheering, sanctifying, quickening, to remember Him; therefore let us not fail to come. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Sacrament better than a sermon*:—Frequently to me the Supper has been much better than a sermon. It has the same teaching-power, but it is more vivid. The Lord is known to us in the breaking of bread, though our eyes have been holden during His discourse. I can see a good meaning in the saying of Henry III., of France, when he preferred the Sacrament to a sermon: "I had rather see my Friend than hear Him talked about." I love to hear my Lord talked about, for so I often see Him, and I see Him in no other way in the Supper than in a sermon; but sometimes, when my eye is weak with weeping, or dim with dust, that double glass of the bread and wine suits me best. (*Ibid.*) *The ends for which the Holy Communion is appointed*:—1. It is appointed to be a memorial of Christ. 2. It is a standing evidence of the truth of Christianity. 3. It furnishes an opportunity of the open profession of the Christian religion in general, and, especially, of our trusting in the sacrifice of Christ for forgiveness and acceptance with God. 4. Another end of the Lord's Supper is to be an act of Church fellowship, or communion. 5. The Lord's Supper gives an opportunity of covenanting with God, and engaging to be the Lord's. He who partakes of the Communion is, by that very act, as completely and voluntarily bound to serve the Lord, as if he had engaged aloud to do so in the plainest terms of speech, or subscribed, with his own hand, a written deed to that effect. It follows, too, by necessary consequence, that, though he is not bound to anything to which he was not in duty bound before, yet, if he abandon himself to sin, he is justly chargeable with breach of engagement. This argument does not rest on anything peculiar to the Supper; but it applies to it with particular force. 6. Another very comprehensive end of this ordinance is to be a means of cherishing all the graces of the Divine life. We say of cherishing them, not of implanting them; for, though the grace of God is not to be limited, and may reach the heart, for the first time, in any circumstances, those who partake of the Lord's Supper ought already to be possessed of the Christian character in some degree. 7. Once more, this ordinance is intended to lead our thoughts forward to our Lord's second coming. It is not only retrospective, but prospective. It is not only a remembrance of something past, but an anticipation of something future. (*James Foote, M.A.*) *Remembering Jesus*:—In remembrance of Him! What a flood of recollections comes back to us as we think on these words. To every class, age, and character amongst us those words are spoken. To you babes and children He says, "Do this in remembrance of Me, the Child Jesus, who for you once lay as a babe in the manger at Bethlehem, who for your sakes grew as a child in favour with God and man, who was obedient to His parents, a gentle, holy Child; do this, be obedient, be gentle, be loving, keep your baptismal vow in remembrance of Me." It speaks to you, young men, and says, "Do this, keep yourselves pure, flee fleshly lusts which war against the soul, be helpful, be earnest, not slothful in business, labour honestly in your appointed task, do this in remembrance of Me, who as a young man was pure and earnest and helpful, who laboured patiently and obscurely in lowly Nazareth." He speaks to all who have money or time or influence at their disposal, He says, "Do this, go about doing good, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, comfort the fatherless and the widow; never turn your face from any poor man; if thou hast much, give plenteously, if thou hast little do thy diligence to give gladly of that little, do this in remembrance of Me, the Man Christ Jesus, who went about doing good, who gave up all time, glory, honour, wealth, life itself, for others, who sought out the ignorant and those who were out of the way, who dried the widow's tears, who ministered to the sick, who was not ashamed to help and comfort even the publican and the fallen woman, who suffered hunger and thirst, and want, and insult for His people; O you, who are called by My name, do this in remembrance of Me, for in that ye do such things unto the least of My people, ye do it unto Me, and verily ye have your reward." To you who are anyways afflicted and distressed He speaks and says, "Do this in remembrance of Me, bear this cross meekly in remembrance of that bitter cross of Mine, for what sorrow is like unto My sorrow, what night of agony can equal that night in Gethsemane, what grave can now be without hope since that one grave in the Garden which was unsealed on Easter morning?" (*H. J. Wilmot Buxton, M.A.*) *The memorial of Jesus*:—I. THE INJUNCTION OF A DEEPLY DEVOTED FRIEND. II. THE INJUNCTION OF A DEPARTED FRIEND. III

WHAT DO WE SPECIALLY COMMEMORATE BY OUR COMPLIANCE WITH THIS COMMAND? His death, as a sacrificial atonement for our sins, and as the most remarkable display of His love for us, though sinners. IV. In commemorating Christ's death by this ordinance, WE RECALL THE IGNOMINY, REPROACH, AND SHAME HE ENDURED ON OUR BEHALF. V. Reflect that THESE THINGS, MORE THAN ALL OTHERS, ARE WORTHY OF BEING HELD IN EVERLASTING REMEMBRANCE. VI. HERE, TOO, WE KEEP IN REMEMBRANCE TRANSACTIONS IN WHICH EVERY GENERATION HAS THE SAME INTEREST, AND WHICH PRESENT TO ALL THE SAME MOST INVITING AND SOLEMN ASPECTS. VII. Once more, in the same direction of thought, we observe that, IN THE CELEBRATION OF DEEDS OF PROWESS AND PATRIOTISM, THE REMOTER THE PERIOD OF THEIR PERFORMANCE, THE LESS IS THE INTEREST AWAKENED BY THEM, while in relation to the great event which we this day commemorate, THE REMOTER THE AGE AND GENERATION, THE DEEPER WILL BE THE INTEREST FELT IN IT, AND MORE NUMEROUS WILL THEY BE WHO CELEBRATE IT. VIII. IN THIS ORDINANCE CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED UPON TO REMEMBER AN UNSEEN FRIEND, UNTIL THE APPOINTED PERIOD OF HIS REAPPEARANCE. IX. FROM THE SIMPLE NATURE OF THE SYMBOLS EMPLOYED, WE INFER THAT THIS COMMEMORATION IS TO BE UNIVERSAL AS THE CHURCH, AND EXTENSIVE AS THE WORLD. X. Notice THE PECULIAR CHARACTER OF THIS COMMAND AS DISTINGUISHED FROM ALL OTHERS ENJOINED BY DIVINE AUTHORITY. This commemorative command is not issued to us so much in the manner of a Lord and lawgiver, as in the character of a claim of gratitude and affection. The Creator commands thus, "Do this and live; or, fail to do, and die." So does the Lawgiver command—"Thou shalt do this in fear of Me, and of the penalties of disobedience." But our Lord's command in the text speaks to us in a very different manner. He does not say, "Do this in fear of Me as God," but "Do this in remembrance of Me, as Redeemer"—"Do this, I beseech you, as you love Me, and as I have loved you. I have done My work—"It is finished." Now do your part in remembrance of this finished work." In obeying this command, we obey it as having especial and peculiar reference to the Mediator. Other commands, like those of the moral law, respect the providence and moral government of God, and the benefit of man—this one directly issues from, and gives glory to, the dying Redeemer, the God-man, "the Author and Finisher of our faith." In His other commands Christ addresses us as our Master, our Shepherd, our Divine and Supreme Teacher—in this He instructs us in our duties to God, to our neighbour, and to ourselves. All His other commands appear to point outwards in the direction of various rights and duties; this command only points INWARDS: others, away from Himself—this, to Himself. "Do this in remembrance of Me—in remembrance of My body, My blood, My death." That death which I endured for your sakes, do you at least remember for My sake." (*J. R. Leifchild, M.A.*) *Design of the Lord's Supper*.—I. COMMEMORATIVE. 1. "In remembrance of Me"—the end. 2. "Do this"—the means. II. REPRESENTATIVE. 1. The bread, or Christ's body, represents His personality, or the Incarnation. 2. The wine, or Christ's blood, represents His work, or the Atonement. 3. The bread and wine, the body and blood, represent the incarnate career. III. PROCLAMATIVE. An immortal witness to the crucifixion (1 Cor. xi. 26). IV. COVENANTIVE (Luke xxii. 20). The engagement both Divine and human. V. COMMUNICATIVE (1 Cor. x. 17). VI. ASSOCIATIVE. Personal membership in Christ is universal co-membership of Christ's people. VII. ANTICIPATIVE (Matt. xxvi. 29). The dirge glides into the psalm. Hint of the new heavens and new earth. Bridegroom and bride at the same marriage-supper of the Lamb (Rev. xix. 6-9). (*National Baptist.*) *The blood of the new covenant*.—I. THE NEW COVENANT OF FORGIVENESS AND LIFE. The new reminds of the old. From the old we may learn what to look for as essential features of the new. Take three illustrations—1. The covenant with Noah, on leaving the Ark. 2. The covenant with Abraham, on entering Canaan. 3. The covenant with Moses, on leading the people from Egypt. The new covenant is an engagement between God and man, through Christ, who acts as representative of God to man and of man to God. It implies mutual pledges. On God's side is pledged forgiveness; remission of sins; and life, in its fullest, highest meaning. On man's side is pledged the obedience of faith. II. THE BLOOD WHICH SEALS AND SANCTIONS THE COVENANTS. Look again at the three cases mentioned. Each covenant was sealed with blood. Noah took of the clean beasts for his offering, which devoted the spared lives to the service of God. Abraham divided the creatures, when he entered into his covenant. And Moses sprinkled with blood both the book and the people, when the covenant was ratified. Why always with blood? Because the blood is the symbol of the life,

and, so, shedding blood was a symbolical way of taking a solemn vow to give the whole life to obedience. Then see how Christ's blood becomes the seal of the new covenant. Take Christ as Mediator for God. He condescended to our weakness, and pledged His very being, His very life, to His faithfulness towards us. In this sense He is God's sacrifice. Take Christ as mediator for man. And in this He is man's sacrifice. Then two things come to view. 1. He seals our pledge that we will spend life in obedience, serving God up to and through death. In accepting Christ as our Saviour, we acknowledge that He has taken this pledge for us. 2. In giving His blood, His life, to us to partake of, Christ would give us the strength to keep our pledge. Illustrate by the Scottish Covenanters, opening a vein, and signing with their life-blood the "Covenant" on the gravestone, in Greyfriars Church, Edinburgh. What, then, is the pledge which we take afresh in each sacramental act? Obedience unto death. The obedience of faith. What is the pledge we receive afresh in every sacramental act? The assurance of Divine forgiveness, and eternal life. Why do we take the sacramental emblems together? In order that we may be mutual witnesses; and then true helpers one of another in keeping our pledge. (*The Weekly Pulpit.*)

Vers. 21-23. The Son of Man goeth.—*The Son of Man, and His going*:—I. **THE SON OF MAN.** 1. Reference of the appellation. Nothing is more certain than that the appellation, "the Son of Man," belongs to Jesus Christ, and is peculiar to Him. 2. Origin of the appellation (see *Psa. xviii. 17*). 3. Meaning of the appellation. When the Messiah is termed "the Son of Man," the term fixes the mind both on the reality of His manhood, and on the circumstances which distinguish Him among men. It marks Him as truly a man, a descendant of man; but it as really marks Him as standing out from the rest of men. The leading thoughts suggested by the designation, "the Son of Man," as given to our Lord Jesus Christ, are these: that He is a real man, truly a partaker of human nature; that He is a perfect man, the normal man, man as he should be; that He is the representative man, the second Adam, charged with the responsibilities of the race; that He is the God-man, a true man in union with the true God; finally, that He is the predicted man, the great subject of New Testament prophecy; a man, a son of man—the man, the son of man. II. **THE GOING OF THE SON OF MAN.** The predestined, predicted "going" of this Son of Man comes now to be considered. "The Son of Man," said the Son of Man Himself, goeth, "goeth as was determined, goeth as it is written." Heaven was His original abode—earth was His present residence; but it was not intended to be His permanent dwelling-place. He had come from heaven to earth, and was to go from earth to heaven. When He came, He came not unsent. He was commissioned to do a great work, and, when that work was accomplished, He was to return to Him that sent Him. 1. He went to the grave. 2. He went to the grave as it is written. Before proceeding farther in tracing the Son of Man's amazing journey, it may be well for us here to stop and inquire how, when He went thus to the grave, He went "as it is written"? Here, there are three remarks which deserve our attention—(1) He went in the character in which it was written He should go; (2) He went in the disposition in which it was written He should go; and (3) In many of the particular and even minute details of His progress, He went "as it was written." (1) He suffered and died as a public person, the representative of His people, the victim of sin. He suffered for us, the just in the room of the unjust; and this is as it was written. (2) He went, as we have seen, in the spirit of the most entire self-devotedness, cheerful resignation, magnanimous fortitude. No man took His life from Him; He laid it down of Himself. And all this was written of Him. (3) The agony in Gethsemane was as it was written; also His betrayal, the particular insults and injuries done Him, the manner in which His death was accomplished, the circumstances of His funeral, &c. 3. He went to heaven. 4. He went to heaven as it is written. (*D. Brown, D.D.*)

Vers. 24-30. He that is greatest among you let him be as the younger.—*How to be the greatest in Christ's Kingdom*:—I. **THERE IS A NECESSARY AND NATURAL DESIRE IN MAN FOR SUPERIORITY.** 1. It is taken for granted that the principle exists universally. 2. It is admitted that the desire is an inherent principle. 3. It is therefore a holy and righteous principle. 4. It is a necessary principle. II. **THE BEST MEN MAY FAIL TO DISCOVER THE TRUE WAY TO HONOUR AND DIGNITY.** 1. The cause of the disciple's failure. This strife arose in the absence of the Saviour,

2. The spirit of their failure. "Accounted." Carnal, external, worldly ambition.

3. The manifestation of their failure. III. FIDELITY TO CHRIST IN TRIAL QUALIFIES FOR THE HIGHER SPHERES AND HONOURS IN HIS KINGDOM. 1. Adherence to Christ brings us into contact with the greatest trials. 2. All true disciples cleave to Christ, even in His trials. 3. Christ will honourably acknowledge and reward fidelity in His disciples. (1) It is honour as reward for humble service. (2) It is distinguished honour. (3) It will be satisfying honour. (*T. M. Evans.*) *The evils of worldly ambition*:—I. THE DISPUTE AROSE—1. Out of ignorance as to the nature of the kingdom of Christ. 2. Out of the worldly ambition of their own hearts. II. THE LORD REBUKED THIS SPIRIT OF WORLDLY AMBITION. By drawing their attention to His own example. Application: 1. Show the widespread prevalence of this worldly ambition in the Church. 2. Urge lowliness of mind. (1) By the strong commendation Christ bestows on it. (2) By the injury done to the cause of Christ, when His followers manifest the opposite spirit. (*F. F. Goe, M.A.*) *Lessons*:—1. Beware of a proudly aspiring and envious spirit. Seek not to rise on the ruins of others, or by trampling on others. 2. Remember wherein true greatness consists, and follow after it. It consists in high attainments in piety and usefulness. 3. Whatever your attainments may be, be humble, if you would be great. 4. Let the disciples of Christ continue with Him, notwithstanding every trial. (*James Foote, M.A.*) *Self-seeking*:—I. The narrative we are considering discloses what effect SELF-SEEKING HAD on the disciples. 1. It blinded their eyes to the glory of the Son of God. They saw, indeed, His mighty works, and longed to be able to do such works themselves; but the hidden life of righteousness and peace and love they did not see and were not yet capable of seeing. Darkness cannot comprehend the light. Men seeking conspicuous places cannot understand the mind which was in Christ Jesus, who made Himself of no reputation, humbled Himself, and became obedient even to the death of the cross. 2. The self-seeking spirit plunged the disciples into a quarrel on the eve of a great occasion. 3. The self-seeking spirit put the disciples into a false attitude of presumption, undertaking more than they were able to do. "Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask." 4. The spirit of self-seeking confused their notions of dominion. They had adopted the maxims of the Gentiles, and were in danger of believing that a man was great simply because he exercised authority. II. SELF-SACRIFICE. 1. The courage of self-sacrifice. It shrinks back from no danger, fears no hardship, and is superior to all suffering. He took the twelve disciples apart and said unto them: "We go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be betrayed, condemned, and crucified." Knowing all things that should be accomplished, He went forward; He went forward that they might be accomplished. 2. The universality of self-sacrifice. Because this is the way of the Son of Man, therefore it must become the way of every man. Each man is to take up his cross. Each man is to become like the man. 3. The reward of self-sacrifice. Spiritual promotion comes according to just and immutable law. 4. The kingdom of self-sacrifice. They would reverse the maxims of the Gentiles, and reckon the servant greater than the master. (*Edward B. Mason.*) "*As he that doth serve*":—Dr. Muhlenburg gave a beautiful illustration of obedience to his Master when he once took up a tray of dishes in St. Luke's hospital and carried them down to the kitchen. Some one meeting him, and protesting against his doing such menial work, he quickly said, "What am I, but a waiter in the Lord's hotel?" *The law of service*:—The desire for distinction is one of the radical principles of our nature; never so crucified and buried but that, in unexpected ways and moments, it may revive, and rise again in power. In the world we find it, and in the Church. Charles V. could lay off the imperial purple, but could not so easily dispossess himself of the imperial will. Simon Stylites, on his pillar in the Lybian desert, was as willing to draw crowds out after him as any most lordly Bishop of Alexandria. The decrepit anchorite, in spite of his austerities, was still a man; his stomach hungry for bread, his heart hungry for applause. This subtle passion is strongest in the middle and more athletic period of life. It comes in between the love of pleasure, which besets our youth, and the love of gain, which besets our age. Though liable to desperate abuse, this passion, like every other, was benevolently given. If it causes wars, and builds up oppressive institutions, poisoning the hearts and cursing the lives of men, it is likewise one of the sharpest spurs to honourable toil, inspires the grandest achievements, and strikes its deepest roots into the deepest natures. It is, then, not to be fought against, as an enemy to virtue, but drawn into service rather, as an ally. I. TRUE GREATNESS IS NOT INDICATED EITHER BY A CONSPICUOUS POSITION,

OR THE BUZZ OF POPULAR APPLAUSE. Exalted stations add nothing to human stature. A great reputation may chance to balloon a very little man. II. TRUE GREATNESS IS NOT INDICATED INFALLIBLY EVEN BY THE PRESENCE OF GREAT ABILITIES, OR GREAT ACQUISITIONS. Hero-worship is a perpetual fact in history. Mankind are sadly prone to be fascinated by mere ability, or what is so esteemed, irrespective of its exercise; by mere learning, irrespective of its aims and uses. We encounter this idolatry in every walk of life. Much lamentation is poured out over what is called dormant power—Cromwells that lead no armies, Newtons that write no “Principia,” Miltons that build no lofty rhymes. Men are named in every circle, of whom it is remarked that they are possessed of great abilities, if they would only exercise them; or possessed of great learning, if they would only use it. No doubt there is such a thing as having one’s talent, a real talent, laid up in a napkin. But there is probably much less of waste in this way than is commonly supposed. There is a meaning, perhaps, in that feature of the Gospel parable, which represents the idle talent as being a solitary and single one; a talent in some one direction, as that of a mere chemist, mathematician, linguist, or logician. Ability of this sort, thus partial, limited, and narrow, may doubtless be content to slumber, or exercise itself only in trifling. But true greatness cannot justly be predicated of any such ability. Real power has fulness and variety. It is not narrow like lightning, but broad like light. The man who truly and worthily excels in any one line of endeavour, might also, under a change of circumstances, have excelled in some other line. He who eight times led conquering legions into Gaul, could also write matchless commentaries describing their exploits. He who fought at Marengo and Austerlitz, could also build Alpine roads and construct the Code Napoléon. He who sang “Paradise Lost,” could also pen ablest state papers. III. THE IDEAL AND MEASURE OF GREATNESS, AS SET BEFORE US BY CHRIST HIMSELF, CONSISTS IN USEFULNESS. He who does the greatest amount of good in this world is the greatest man. This is the Christian sentiment. It is also at bottom the universal sentiment. The Titans of ancient fable, who piled mountains together, and stormed the heavens, were not great, only huge. Hercules was great by virtue of the twelve great labours which he performed. Grecian art, faultless as it was, failed of being great by being sensual. Hindoo generals are not great leaders, for, though they wield vast masses of men, they wield them to little or no purpose. He is not great, who merely wastes the nations; only he is great who saves and serves them. This rule, which the historic judgment of the world thus proceeds upon, is more an instinct than a principle. Christianity lays it down with emphasis as the highest law. According to this law, he only is great of heart who floods the world with a great affection. He only is great of mind who stirs the world with great thoughts. He only is great of will who does something to shape the world to a great career. And he is greatest who does the most of all these things, and does them best. As to the particular sphere in which a man shall lay out the labour of his life, this must be determined by a wise regard to individual tastes, talents, and circumstances. Each must choose for himself the employment and sphere best suited to his gifts. But all must choose with one heart, one purpose, in the fear of God, and under the light of eternal realities. IV. THE MOTIVES TO THE ADOPTION OF SUCH A RULE OF LIFE ARE OBVIOUS AND STRONG. 1. It is the key to happiness. God is infinitely happy in His boundless beneficence. Christ was happy in giving Himself up a sacrifice for the world. In all ages, the happiest of men have been the busiest and most beneficent. 2. It enhances power; relative power and actual power. He who works for God and man, with the least of solicitude about himself, has all the forces of Providence working with him. All these forces are powerful, so is he; and their triumph is his triumph. Moreover, the benevolent affections are the best stimulants of the intellect, the best allies and energizers of the will. Henry Martyn was twice the man for going to Persia that he would have been had he remained in England; and consequently has twice the fame. It is by dying that we live. It is only the good and the self-denying who rule us from their urns. 3. It is noble. Selfishness is pitiful and paltry. (*R. D. Hitchcock, D.D.*) **He that serveth**—*The servant of sinners*:—We find in these words a double reference—first, to the character, and secondly, to the office, of the Son of Man; to His character as the lowly one, to His office as the servant. For the purpose of bringing both these things before His disciples, He makes use of those marvellous words, “I am among you as the Serving One.” Consider three things in reference to this service. I. ITS HISTORY. It is not with His birth in Bethlehem that Christ’s service begins. His visit to our first father in paradise was its true com-

mencement. After that we find Him, age after age, visiting the children of men, and always in the character of one ministering to their wants. At His ascension He only entered on a new department of service; and as the Advocate with the Father, the Intercessor, the Forerunner, we see Him still serving. Nor, when He comes again in strength and majesty, as King of kings and Lord of lords, does He lose sight of His character as the Ministering One (Luke xii. 37). II. **LET US CONSIDER THE NATURE OF THIS SERVICE.** It is in all respects like Himself—like Him who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor. 1. It is willing service. His varied rounds of service are no heavy task. He is the willing servant of the needy. 2. It is a loving service. Out of no fountain save that of love could such amazing, such endless acts of service flow. The loving and the serving are inseparable. 3. It is self-denying service. To continue ministering, day after day, in the midst of reproach, and opposition, and rejection, was self-denial and devotedness such as man can hardly either credit or conceive. 4. It is patient, unwearied service. He has compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way. He breaks not the bruised reed; He quenches not the smoking flax. By day or by night we find Him ever girt for service. 5. It is free service. It cannot be bought, for what gold could purchase it? Neither does it need to be bought, for it is freely rendered. III. **ITS ENDS AND OBJECTS.** It is to sinners that this service is rendered; and there is much in this to exhibit the ends which it has in view. This gracious servant of the needy is willing to be employed by any one, no matter who, let him be the poorest, and the sickliest, and the feeblest of all who ever sought a helper, a protector, or a guide, on their way to the kingdom. (H. Bonar, D.D.) *The life of service:*—Let us ask ourselves why our Lord has chosen so much for mankind in proposing a life of service as the true life of man. Service, I apprehend, is thus necessary in some shape for all of us, because it involves the constant repression of those features of our nature which constantly tend to drag it down and degrade it. Aristotle remarked, more than two thousand years ago, that all our faulty tendencies range themselves under the two heads of temper and desire—bad temper or ill-regulated desire. When the one element is not predominant in an undisciplined character, you will find, in some shape, the other, and sometimes you will find the one and sometimes the other at different periods in the life of the same man. Now, service—that is, the voluntary undertaking of work in obedience to the Higher Will—is a corrective to each of these tendencies. 1. It is a corrective, first of all, of temper in its ordinary and everyday form of self-assertion or pride. The man who serves from his heart cannot indulge in self-assertion; he represses self if he tries to perform his service well. Each effort, each five minutes, of conscientious service has the effect of keeping self down, of bidding it submit to a higher and more righteous will; and this process steadily persevered in ultimately represses it, if not altogether, yet very considerably. And what a substantial service this is to human nature and to human character. Be sure of this, that self-assertion, if unchecked, is pitiless when any obstacle to its gratification comes in its way. The self-asserting man delights in making an equal or an inferior feel the full weight of his petty importance; he enjoys the pleasure of commanding in the exact ratio of the pain or discomfort which he sees to be the cost of obedience; and thus, sooner or later, self-assertion becomes tyranny, and tyranny, sooner rather than later, means some revolt which carries with it the ruin of order. The tyrant in the State, in the family, in the office, in the workshop, is the man bent on the assertion of self; and, despite the moments of passing gratification which he enjoys, such a tyrant is really more miserable than his subjects, for the governing appetite of his character can never be adequately gratified; it is in conflict with the nature of things, it is in conflict with the laws of social life, it is in conflict with the Divine will; and when it is repressed, curbed, crushed by voluntary work in obedience to a higher will, a benefit of the very first order has been conferred on human nature and on human society. 2. And in like manner work voluntarily undertaken in obedience to a higher will corrects ill-regulated desire. Distinct from gross sin is the slothful, easy, enervated, self-pleasing temper which is the soil in which gross sin grows. The New Testament calls this district of human nature concupiscence—that is to say, misdirected desire—desire which was meant to cleave to God—at least, to centre in God the eternal beauty, but which, through some bad warp, does, in fact, attach itself to created objects, and generally to some object attractive to the senses. This evil can only be radically cured by making God the object of desire—that is to say, by a love of God; and a true love of God will

express itself in service—the service of man as well as of God (1 John iv 20). Service keeps this ill-regulated desire at bay, and it centres the soul's higher desire or love more and more perfectly on its one legitimate object. And then, incidentally, it braces character, and this is what is wanted if a man is to escape from the enervation of a life of sensuous and effeminate ease. (*Canon Liddon.*) *The glory of service*.—Helpfulness is the highest quality of the human life. Service is the crowning glory of man. The serving type is the noblest type of all the manifold varieties of human development. The principle of the text is not to the effect that service is one and the same with, or altogether made up of, what we know as the activities of life. "And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." That it is not always what we call the most active life which is the most useful. Activity is not all of service. There is the moral power static, as well as the moral power dynamic. Again, let us note that service does not discard the element of beauty or the splendour of intellectual gifts. Beauty, rightly so named, binds up ever within it a factor of highest value. A beautiful picture is nothing less than a moral force in the world. The Madonna face, the Madonna form, through the centuries rebuke coarseness, teach purity, uplift human thoughts, refine human souls. So with flowers. Their beauty has a moral value. The window-sill which lifts them up is twice blessed. It blesses him who plants and him who passes. The law of service, as proclaimed by highest authority, refuses her not beauty as an ally. All that is meant is that, when Beauty stands by herself, divorced from Service, then the latter is higher, nobler. So also of the splendour of mental gifts. This splendour also may rest upon, may add a new beauty and a new power to that which is the highest type of human life. But when it stands off by itself, when it offers itself as a substitute for or a rival of service, then to the latter must be given the pre-eminence. Measured by the true standard of human greatness, the inventor of the Calculus is less of a man than the founder of London's ragged schools. It is better and it is nobler to help one poor, vicious human life into a pure and happy immortality than it is to weigh the sun or to write equations for the planets. The same must also be said when high station is brought into comparison with helpfulness. But let us turn to the direct consideration of the great canon of human worthiness. I. HELPFULNESS IS MORE LIKE, IN MORE PERFECT HARMONY WITH, THE DIVINE BEAUTY, WITH THAT DIVINE BEAUTY WHICH HAS ITS EVERER APOCALYPSE UPON NATURE'S FIELD AND IN THE HUMAN SOUL. Even upon His material works has God stamped the law of sympathetic service. Read this written out in the clouds of the sky. These are the great water-carriers of the world. And how diligently, how joyously, they carry on their labour of love! The huge masses skip and whirl and chase each other like lambs at play; but, however weary, they never think of laying down the burden which they bear. And the mountains, too, are in service. Look upon the Andes, vertebral ridge of a continent. They are a giant hand raised to catch and redistribute the moisture of the trade-winds from the Atlantic, thus sending it back across the plains in healthful and life-giving streams. And water, too, serves. By one of its lines cold is carried southward, and by another heat is carried northward, thus diminishing the inequalities of temperature and making the earth a pleasant residence for man. So is it through every department. Nature is an organism. Not a drop of water leads a selfish life, not a wind-blast is without its mission. And let that human life which dares to lift heavenward the formal profession as the fulfilment of the Divine demand—let such a one take his rebuke from ocean's lips! Let him hear it sounding in the winds of heaven! Let him hear it thundered forth by the everlasting mountains. Human lives are not wanted in this world for ornament. God has prettier things for this purpose. And such a life, I say, is in full harmony with the Divine. For a long time the world and man knew not God. In this ignorance and blindness we can well imagine men asking the question, "What is God?" To whom is He like? Is He the Zeus of the celestial world, full of vindictiveness and passion? Is He the Oriental monarch, luxuriously lounging in the palace room of the universe? And while men so questioned, the door of heaven opened, and a Divine one in visible form walked forth before the eyes of men. And this form, what was it? "That of a servant." He bore men's burdens. He healed men's sicknesses. He comforted human sorrows. He went about doing good. He gave His life a ransom for many. And now that the Divine Spirit is in the world the manifestation is the same. He, too, comes in service. He is the Advocate, the Comforter, His

the soft hand which wipes away the falling tear and binds up the broken heart. Such is the Divine, such is Deity. II. But, in the second place, OF ALL MORAL FORCES, HELPFULNESS IS THE MOST POTENT IN THE EDIFICATION OF INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER. There is nothing which grounds a man in truth and righteousness so firmly, there is nothing which lifts him up so surely, as the doing of good to others. This, indeed, is only the highest illustration of a law wide as the realm of human life. The bird which sings for others gladdens its own heart with its song. The brook which flows with music for listening ears grows more clear and limpid as it flows. Old ocean's mighty tides and racing gulf streams, which ever serve the need of man, paint the great deep with its spotless blue, and bring safety and life to all the mighty host which march and counter-march within its hollow bed. In doing good, everything in God's universe gets good. Service of others is highest service of self, and the best way for any man to grow in grace is to move forward into service. III. But, again, HELPFULNESS IS MORE LASTING, MORE IMMORTAL, THAN ANYTHING ELSE OF HUMAN LIFE. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. But charity never faileth." Bad as is this world, it is good enough to transmute and to hold immortality within it. The beauty of the beneficent deed, the widow's two mites, the alabaster box of ointment, Sir Philip Sidney's cup of cold water; the passing shadow of Florence Nightingale, which the dying soldier strove to kiss; above all, the patient and gentle self-denial of the Christ life—these are pictures which this world—God's world, after all—will not let fade. The suns of centuries rise and set upon them. Consider what this canon of human worthiness calls for of those who would receive honour under it. 1. This, first of all: personal goodness. In this world of ours the tares grow together with the wheat. Service of man calls for a servant first of all; and this can no one of us be who is not disinterestedly in love with his kind, and true and pure in all his works. To do good works which shall endure we ourselves must be good. 2. In the second place, the canon of the text demands that we should be willing to help when help is required. 3. The law of the higher type also makes this a duty. We should seek opportunities for doing good. The glory of the patriarch of Uz was written in these words, "The cause that I knew not I searched out." 4. The principle of the text teaches also the obligation of self-training. If we do not know how to help now, why, then, we should learn. If we are unfit for service now, we must make ourselves fit. Congenital infirmities may be corrected. The inertia of selfish idleness and of grasping covetousness may be overcome by him who, upon his knees, opens his heart to the entrance of the Divine Spirit. The enthusiasm of humanity may be caught from the example and inspiration of Jesus Christ. The mill-wheel will cease to revolve when the waters of the rushing stream are cut off; the moving train will stop when the glowing heat cools within the hidden chamber; and charity in this world will degenerate into a professional schedule without inspiration and without power when the name of Jesus is no longer writ by the hand of Faith upon its banner. (*S. S. Mitchell, D.D.*) *Servus servorum*:—I. OUR LORD'S POSITION. 1. In the world our Lord was not one of the cultured few on whom others wait. He was a working-man, and in spirit Servant of servants. 2. In the circle of His own disciples He was one that served. 3. In celebration of Holy Supper, He was specially among them "as He that serveth," for He washed His disciples' feet. 4. In the whole course of His life, Jesus on earth ever took the place of the servant or slave. His ear was bored by His entering into covenant. "Mine ears hast thou digged, or pierced (Psa. xl. 6 (margin); Exod. xxi. 6). His office was announced at His coming, "Lo, I come to do thy will!" (Psa. xl. 7; Heb. x. 5-9). His nature was fitted for service: He "took upon Him the form of a servant" (Phil. ii. 7). He assumed the lowest place among men (Psa. xxii. 6; Isa. liii. 3). He cared for others, and not for Himself. "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve" (Mark x. 45). He laid aside His own will (John iv. 34; vi. 38). He bore patiently all manner of hardness (1 Peter ii. 23). II. THE WONDER OF IT—that He should be a servant among His own servants. The marvel of it was rendered the greater—1. As He was Lord of all by nature and essence (Col. i. 15-19). 2. As He was superior in wisdom, holiness, power, and in every other way, to the very best of them (Matt. viii. 26, 27; John xiv. 9). 3. As He was so greatly their Benefactor (John xv. 16). 4. As they were such poor creatures, and so unworthy to be served. III. THE EXPLANATION OF IT. We must look for this to His own nature. 1. He is so infinitely great (Heb. i. 2-4).

2. He is so immeasurably full of love (John xv. 9; 1 John iii. 16). IV. THE IMITATION OF IT. 1. In cheerfully choosing to fulfil the most lowly offices. 2. In manifesting great lowliness of spirit and humility of bearing (Eph. iv. 1-3; Phil. ii. 3; 1 Peter v. 5). 3. In laying ourselves out for the good of others. Let self-sacrifice be the rule of our existence (2 Cor. xii. 15). 4. In gladly bearing injustice rather than break the peace, avenge ourselves, or grieve others (1 Peter ii. 19, 20; iii. 14). 5. In selecting that place in which we receive least, and give most; choosing to wait at table rather than to sit at meat. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Christlike service:—A true character can never be built on a false foundation; on the denial of a fact or on pretending not to see it. There are greater men and less; stronger and weaker; wiser and less wise; men fit to rule and men fit only to be led; some who can teach and others whose business it is to learn. The right relationship between men is to be reached, if at all, by a manly acknowledgment of the facts which divide them and the individual superiorities which set one above another. It is he who can rightly say, "Master and Lord am I"; who can also say with the fullest emphasis, "I am among you as the servant"! I. Since, then, THE MORAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS VOLUNTARY SERVICE were those which gave it worth, let us try in a few words to disentangle these moral characteristics and understand them. They may be summed up, I think, in these two: in unselfish love as the root-virtue, and in lowliness of mind as the specific shape which love must take when it girds itself to serve. II. Taking, then, these words of Jesus, "I am in the midst of you as your attendant," to be virtually descriptive of His whole position ON EARTH and the spirit of His entire career, we find that His life may be described thus: it was a voluntary service of other men, rooted in pure love for them, and carried out with such lowliness of mind as deems no office degrading which can be lovingly rendered. Notice next, more expressly than we have yet done, that such lowly, loving service of others was not in His case an occasional effort or a mere ornament of character exhibited now and then. It formed the staple of His life. Christ came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister; not to enrich Himself, either with nobler or baser wealth, but to impoverish Himself that He might make many rich. With Him it is not, as with other men, "I will sit at table, and do you wait on Me"; but it is, "you sit at table, and I will wait." III. But is this, after all, A MORE EXCELLENT WAY WHICH JESUS HAS SHOWN? Wherein is it more excellent? The King's Son came among us. We called Him our "Lord and Master," and we said well; but He was as one who served us! Now we know that the Father on high is like unto Him. The divinest part of His relationship to His creatures lies here, that being Lord of all He makes Himself the servant of all. How is He by day and night creation's unwearied watcher, provider, attendant, benefactor! The lions roar and He feedeth them. Not a sparrow falls but He heeds it. The lilies spin not, yet He clothes them. True, patient minister to each creature's need, in whose loving eyes nothing is too minute to be remembered nor too mean to be served; He is for ever with tender humble carefulness laying His might and His providence and His inventiveness and His tastefulness at the service of all creation. What! cries out the heart of the proud, is this your conception of the Eternal? Were not all things made for His glory, then? Yes, indeed, for His glory; but not in the ignoble sense we so often intend! Not made to be sacrificed to His pleasure. Not made for a boastful display of His omnipotence or skill; nor as mere trappings or attendants to lend dignity to His court. Away with such vain thoughts, borrowed from the barbaric and vulgar splendour of an Oriental despotism! Verily, the universe is the mirror of its Creator's glory; but it is so because it shows Him to be prodigal of His love, lavishing His care upon the least, stooping to adorn the poorest, and made then supremely glad when He can see His creatures glad. The glory of God; where is it? that He ministers to all! His blessedness; what is it? to make others blessed! I see, then, that when the Son came among us as a servant, it became Him as a son to do so, for it became the Father whose Son He was. It was a prolongation only, although a right marvellous one, of that character whose Divineness men had been slow to see, but which God the Maker had pencilled with light across His creation. (J. O. Dykes, D.D.)

Continued with Me in My temptations.—*The solitariness of Christ in His temptations*:—We get here a wonderful glimpse into the heart of Christ, and a most pathetic revelation of His thoughts and experiences; all the more precious because it is quite incidental, and, we may say, unconscious. I. THE TEMPTED CHRIST. "In My temptations"—so He summed up His life! The period to which He refers lies between the wilderness and the garden, and includes neither. His whole ministry was a field of continual and diversified

temptations. No sham fight. 1. Let us think of the tempted Christ, that our conceptions of His sinlessness may be increased. His was no untried and cloistered virtue, pure because never brought into contact with seducing evil, but a militant and victorious goodness, that was able to withstand in the evil day. 2. Let us think of the tempted Christ, that our thankful thoughts of what He bore for us may be warmer and more adequate, as we stand afar off and look on at the mystery of His battle with our enemies and His. 3. Let us think of the tempted Christ, to make the lighter burden of our cross and our less terrible conflict easier to bear and to wage. So will He continue with us in our temptations, and patience and victory flow to us from Him. II. THE LONELY CHRIST. The most solitary man that ever lived. His nearest kindred stood aloof from Him. Even in the small company of His friends, there were absolutely none who either understood Him or sympathized with Him. Talk of the solitude of pure character amid evil, like Lot in Sodom, or of the loneliness of uncomprehended aims or unshared thoughts—whoever experienced that as keenly as Christ did? The more pure and lofty a nature, the more keen its sensitiveness, the more exquisite its delights, and the sharper its pains. The more loving and unselfish a heart the more its longing for companionship; and the more its aching in loneliness. That lonely Christ sympathizes with all solitary hearts. If ever we feel ourselves misunderstood and thrown back upon ourselves; if ever our heart's burden of love is rejected; if our outward lives be lonely and earth yields nothing to stay our longing for companionship; if our hearts have been filled with dear ones and are now empty, or but filled with tears, let us think of Him and say, "Yet I am not alone." He lived alone, alone He died, that no heart might ever be solitary any more. III. THE GRATEFUL CHRIST. His heart was gladdened by loving friends, and He recognized in their society a ministry of love. Where there is a loving heart there is acceptable service. It is possible that our poor, imperfect deeds shall be an odour of a sweet smell, acceptable, well-pleasing to Him. Which of us that is a father is not glad at his children's gifts, even though they be purchased with his own money, and be of little use? They mean love, so they are precious. And Christ, in like manner, accepts what we bring, even though it be chilled by selfishness, and faith broken by doubt, and submission crossed by self-will. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) I appoint unto you a kingdom.—*Called to a kingdom*:—There was once a young prince, heir to the throne of Russia, who was giving himself to every form of dissipation. He took up his residence in Paris, and entered heartily into all its gaieties. One evening, as he was seated with a number of young profligates like himself, drinking, gambling, and making merry, a message was privately conveyed to him that his father was dead. Pushing away from him the dice and the wine-cup, he rose up and said, "I am emperor!" and forthwith announced that his must henceforth be a different kind of life. Young men, I have to tell you to-night of a kingdom to which you are called. To you the Lord Jesus says, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me." To no meaner rank are you to aspire than to that of "kings and priests unto God." But when the day came that Saul was actually to be made king, the youth was "not to be found." He had hid himself among the stuff. Saul concealed amid the baggage, perhaps the commissariat for that large assembly of people; hidden, tall fellow as he was, amid the heap of boxes and baskets of all kinds—is he not a picture of many a young man whom God is calling to a kingdom, but who is chind-deep in business, so absorbed in worldly matters that he cannot attend to the affairs of his soul? (*J. T. Davidson, D.D.*)

Vers. 31-34. Satan hath desired to have you.—*The temptation of St. Peter*:—Our Lord is conversing here with His dear disciples a little before His crucifixion. In the tenderness of His heart, He almost thanks them for their faithful adherence to Him (vers. 28-30). And now comes a sudden transition, showing us the strong feeling at work at this time in our Lord's breast. He thinks the next moment of the perils these men will have to pass through in their way to those thrones, and gives them abruptly a warning of one of them. I. We must begin with THIS WARNING. 1. See in it our Lord's knowledge of the invisible world. We know nothing of Satan but what we are told. But the Lord Jesus does see him as he goes about; and He not only sees him, He can look into his heart and discern the secret purposes and desires of it. 2. See next here the crafty policy of Satan. "He hath desired to have you," our Lord says; "you especially; you, believers in Me, rather than the Jews or heathen around you; you, My most beloved disciples," &c. Why? Because they stood more in his way than any others. 3. We may see here the

limited power of Satan. He cannot touch one of these men without God's permission. II. Leaving now the other disciples, let us look at THE EFFECT OF THIS WARNING ON ONE OF THEM, PETER. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you." 1. Observe, that it excited his love. If mere feeling could have made a martyr, Peter was already prepared to be one. 2. And observe again—this warning did not shake Peter's self-confidence. And yet it was given in a manner calculated to shake it. It made no impression on him or a very faint one. 3. And mark again—this warning did not prevent Peter's fall. III. We may come now to another point in the text—THE TENDER MERCY OF OUR LORD TO PETER NOTWITHSTANDING HIS SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND FALL, or rather, in anticipation of his self-sufficiency and fall. "I have prayed for thee," He says, "that thy faith fail not." 1. We must be struck at once, I think, with the lowliness of this language. Our Lord has been speaking just before in the almost unveiled dignity of the Godhead. He has been manifesting, too, a knowledge of Satan and a knowledge of the human heart such as none but the infinite Jehovah can possess; and yet when His fallen apostle is to be rescued, what does He say? "I will rescue him"? or, as in Paul's case, "My grace is sufficient for him"? No; He speaks now as a feeble man; "The mighty God only can rescue him. I have prayed for him." What a view does this give us of our Lord's humility! And what a view, too, of the awful nature of sin! of the difficulty of extricating even a servant of God out of it! 2. Observe, too, the peculiar tenderness of His love for those who are peculiarly tempted. 3. And there is the intercession of our Lord to be noticed here—its influence on our preservation from sin or recovery from it. Faith lies at the root of every grace. It is that within us which first lays hold of the Lord Jesus, and it is that which keeps hold of Him. It seems the lowest, the poorest, and meanest of all graces, but it is notwithstanding the most active and operative of all; it secretly does the most. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *The sifting of Peter:—I. THE CHARACTER OF PETER.* The character of Peter is a very marked one. His character stands out in bold prominence and relief, like an object situated on a height, and seen between us and a clear sky. We notice at once his natural sincerity and boldness, his vehemence and self-confidence; his liability to be hurried away by the tide of events and the current of prevailing feeling. We perceive that as a disciple of Christ he is under the guardian care and grace of heaven; but we discover sin lurking within, and bursting forth from time to time as the liquid fire of the volcano breaks out from the mountain whose surface may be covered with the loveliest foliage. His love to Jesus was genuine and sincere—for with all his failings Peter was no hypocrite; yet he not infrequently resists the will of his Master, and at times is positively ashamed of Him. He is zealously affected in every good thing, but his zeal is often unthinking and impetuous, and proceeds from a self-confident and self-righteous rather than a humble and trustful spirit of dependence on God; and it comes forth when it should be restrained, and fails when it should flow. II. *TEMPTATION OF PETER BY SATAN.* "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." We see that we are to regard our temptations as coming from Satan the tempter, the accuser. He who rebelled against God in heaven seeks to thwart His will on earth. "The devil entered into Judas Iscariot," whom he hurried from one crime to another till he laid violent hands on himself. May he not succeed also with his brother apostle? In tempting us Satan takes advantage of two circumstances. He employs the world to seduce us, and he addresses the corruption of the heart. First, he takes advantage of the circumstances in which we are placed, and of the worldly and sinful character of those with whom we mingle. Breathing as we do an infected atmosphere, we are apt to take in malaria which breeds moral disease. III. *THE RECOVERY OF PETER, THROUGH THE PRAYER OF JESUS SUSTAINING HIS FAITH.* It is of vast moment that Christians should know wherein lies the secret of their strength. It lies first of all in the intercession of Christ, and secondly in their remaining faith. 1. It does not lie primarily in yourselves—in the liveliness of your feelings or the strength of your resolutions. Purposes formed in our own strength are like the writing upon the sand, which is swept away by the first breath of the tempest or the first swelling of the tide. The believer's steadfastness does not lie in himself, but in another. His strength is in the foundation on which he rests, and that foundation is the Rock of Ages. How was it that Peter was restored? The cause was to be found in the work of Christ. "I have prayed for thee." He was recovered, not by the meritorious power and efficacy of his own prayers, but by the prayers of Christ. When Peter was brought to repentance he prayed; but there is a previous ques-

tion—What brought him to repentance? If Christ had not first prayed for him, he had never prayed for himself. 2. There was, however, a secondary power, and this was Peter's faith. IV. THE COMMAND, "WHEN THOU ART CONVERTED, STRENGTHEN THY BRETHREN." In this conversion there was much searching. This we learn from the interview with which our Lord favoured Peter after His resurrection. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" was the question; and Peter could answer. Brethren, according to the sins of which you are conscious, so let your love and zeal now be in the service of God. (*J. McCosh, D.D.*) *The sifting of life*:—The figure which Christ here makes use of in order to describe the severe ordeal through which Peter, the most prominent of all the disciples, was to pass, is a very significant one; and we cannot believe that it was used by chance, or without full intention. The sifting of wheat is a most hard and thorough, but a most necessary, process. The wheat, as it has grown, has become associated with the protecting chaff, which it is necessary should be blown away, and with the foreign substances taken from the earth and from the air, which must be separated. Before the wheat is ready for use, it must be sifted or winnowed; no pains must be spared to make the process as thorough as possible. Only an enemy to the wheat, or a disbeliever in its true powers, would desire to spare it such an ordeal. As it falls, after such a process, into the receptacle which has been prepared for it, solid and clean, its value is greatly enhanced. There is now no doubt about its true nature and the work to which it should be put. It carries out all the points of the analogy to notice that Peter is not promised that he shall be saved from the sifting process: no hand is put forth to hold him securely sheltered; no cloud wraps him away from danger. Peter is too valuable to be thus treated. If he is wheat he must be sifted. I. And so we learn the great lesson from Christ, that DIFFICULTIES ARE AS NECESSARY AND BENEFICIAL FOR THE SOUL AS WINNOWING IS FOR THE WHEAT. The winds of temptation blow, and the poor, lightly-weighted souls are carried away; while the strong ones are stripped of many things in which they trusted, and the true power of principle becomes more evident in their lives. The question of the winnowing floor is always being repeated: Are you wheat or chaff? 1. There is the shifting of change of position, the pouring from vessel to vessel—a process under which the light grains are removed, and which finds its parallel in the change of life's demands. You are rich, and the question the next day is, Can you stand poverty? or you are poor, and the sudden access of prosperity tests your real ability and weight. Will the one rob you of your spirit, or the other of your humility? If they will, then you have been sifted with the result of proving that you are but chaff. Changes from joy to sorrow or from sorrow to joy, from light to dark or from dark to light—those have revealed the substance of many a man to us; and we have said, "I thought that he could stand it better," or we have exclaimed, "What a noble man he is! He is just as he was before, not puffed up by his exaltation, not broken by dejection." 2. And there is the sifting of progress: ideas and men all pass through that. New tests are applied, just as ever new sieves, with closer and closer meshes, wait for the falling grain with sharper discrimination at each stage of the process. The truth of one generation or one age of life is sifted before it is accepted by the next. Some accretion, some profitless protecting husk, is cast off, and the substance is more valuable than ever. The man finds, after life's experience, that not one particle of the truth as to honesty, virtue, and God has proved itself false, although he smiles at the childish conceptions which enshrined it for him, and which long ago passed away; and with each generation God's truth is made simpler and clearer to the eyes of all. II. BUT WHAT HAS SATAN TO DO WITH IT? Satan rejoiced at the anticipation of this process and longed to see it begin, because he did not believe that Peter could stand it; he does not believe that any man can, and he longs, therefore, to see men come under the test. At first this sifting seems to give evil the advantage. But the meaning of those words of Christ's gradually comes out: "Fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." There is an ultimate kernel of life which the sifting cannot touch. It is a reality which defies all the processes of ultimate solution which can be brought against it. That is the belief which makes a man strong to endure temptation, brave to pass through all changes, courageous to march with all progress of ideas. It was to the soul that Christ spoke; on it all His work was based. When He had once seen that soul conscious of itself and of its power in the heart of a man, He was not afraid to let the world sift him, though he might be a man with as many weaknesses and foibles as Simon Peter. Let them be shaken off and blown away, like corrupting substances or infolding chaff. When that was all done

the man remained. III. I think, then, that we can understand that tone of confidence with which Jesus speaks of the trial which is to befall His great disciple. To His eye the conditions are not hopeless. He does not deprecate the struggle, but rather in it anticipates the defeat of Satan. But the tone of confidence is still more sublime when THE MEANS OF STRENGTH AND VICTORY are considered. The whole of the sifting process administered by its great master and confident authority, Satan, is to be brought to bear; and yet Peter will not succumb because Christ has prayer for him that his faith fail not. See how Christ puts Himself against the world. Through that prayer the life of Peter was made strong to bear the ordeal; through that prayer he was able to defy the world and Satan. That prayer told of the relation which He had established between that disciple for whom, and the Father to whom, it was offered. He stood between the two. The subject, the offerer, the receiver of the prayer, were one in their purpose and desire to overcome and baffle Satan. Defeat was impossible. (*Arthur Brooks.*)

Christ's warning to Peter:—1. The greatness or nearness of the danger. There are some souls that there is no delaying or dallying with them; but if ye will save them at all, ye must save them quickly; ye must deal roundly and nimbly with them if ever ye intend them any good. The Spirit of God, He speaks quick, and He speaks often, again and again, where He would prevent from danger. 2. The security of the person warned. Peter was not more in danger than he was insensible of his danger. 3. The affection of the Monitor or person that gives the warning; that is also in the doubling of the appellation. It is a sign Christ's heart was much in it, and that He bore a singular love and respect to Peter, in that He does thus passionately admonish him. Love is full of solicitude and carefulness for the party beloved. The matter of the admonition or the warning itself. 1. The persons aimed at. They are here said to be you. He spake before to Peter in the singular, Simon, Simon; now it is you, in the plural. To signify thus much unto us; that there's the same condition of all believers as of one. That which befalls one Christian it is incident to all the rest. The reason of it is this—because they all consist of the same natures, and are acted by the same principles. (1) You believers, rather than other men. Satan's aim is especially at such, to get them. As for wicked and ungodly persons, who are yet in their unregenerate condition, he has them already. And there are two considerations especially which do lay ground to this practice in him. (a) That absolute antipathy and hatred and contrariety which is in him to goodness itself, yea, to God Himself, who is the chiefest good. The devil, because he hates goodness itself, therefore he assaults it wherever he finds it. (b) It proceeds from that envy and pride which is in him. (2) You eminent believers rather than other Christians. This is the manner of Satan to cast his sticks most at those trees which are fullest of fruit; where he spies more grace than ordinary, there especially to lay his chiefest assaults. There is a double reason for it which does encourage him to it—First, it is the greater victory; and secondly, it is the greater advantage. He does more, both in it and by it. The use of this to ourselves is—First, to teach Christians not to trust to their own habitual graces nor to the number or measure of them. Secondly, we learn, hence, not to pass uncharitable censures upon the servants of God which are under temptations, as to conclude them therefore to be none of His servants. (3) You apostles and ministers rather than other eminent believers. I. The danger itself—Satan hath desired you. As here is Satan's restraint, so moreover his malice and boldness of attempt. 1. Here is implied Peter's ignorance and present unadvisedness. He was not aware of this attempt of Satan. So is it likewise with many others of God's servants. Satan does secretly lay siege unto their souls, and they do not discern it. It is a great piece of skill to know indeed when we are tempted, and to be apprehensive that we are under a temptation. 2. We see here also the love of Christ, who helps our ignorance in this particular, and advises us where we are less regardful. 3. Here is also, as sometimes, the eminency and conspicuousness of the temptation. (1) To have you to corrupt you. (2) This were enough to make us look about us; that Satan would have us to corrupt us, but yet that is not all—he would have us to afflict us too. As Satan would weaken our faith, so also darken our comfort; and as he would draw us into sin, so likewise trouble us and torment us for it. II. The AMPLIFICATION of it. And to sift or winnow you as wheat. 1. Take it in an ill sense; as Satan's intent, so to winnow you, is to shake and remove you. This expression shows the unweariedness of Satan in his attempts upon the godly, and his several courses which he takes with them, to annoy them. He shifts them and he removes them from one temptation

to another. But—2. It may also be taken in a good sense; and so, as expressing to us the event of Satan's practices, though beyond his own desire and intention. The winnowing of the corn in the fan, it is not for the hurt of it, but for the good of it. And they fit them also for future service. We see here how also God outwits Satan and destroys his own plots by himself. (*J. Horton, D.D.*) *Peter's sifting*.—I. THE DISCRIMINATION WHICH OUR LORD MAKES IN PRAYING FOR HIS DISCIPLES. Why single out Simon for this peculiar distinction? Because he was the weakest, the most in danger, the most liable to fall. His rashness and impulsiveness would expose him to the fiercest assaults, and render him least able to resist. Let us learn from this that the easily tempted ones are they to whom Christ's sympathy and helpfulness go out in most tender interest. II. THE NATURE OF THE HELP WHICH CHRIST GAVE TO PETER IN HIS PERIL. 1. Notice the individuality of this intercession. "For thee." Each one of us is the object of Christ's particular watchfulness and care. 2. Christ made His supplication before the danger came. "I have prayed." He did not wait until the disciple was in the snare before He sought help for him. 3. The petition itself. What did Jesus ask for His imperilled disciple? Not that he might escape the trial, for he needed just this experience; not even that he might not fall; but that his faith might not fail, might not suffer an utter and endless eclipse as had that of Judas. III. THE RESULT OF PETER'S SIFTING. Chaff sifted out, pure wheat left. IV. THROUGH HIS PAINFUL EXPERIENCE, SIMON WAS PREPARED TO BE A MORE HELPFUL MAN. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." He was to use his new knowledge, gained by his sad and painful experiences, in blessing others. Whatever God does for us, He wants us to do in turn for others. All the lessons He teaches us, He wants us to teach again. (*J. R. Miller, D.D.*) *The benefits of sifting*.—There are defects in many characters which apparently can be removed only by some terrible experiences like those of Peter. This seems to have been true of David. Mingled with all his noble qualities, qualities which made him, when purified, the man after God's own heart, there were many evil elements of which his nature had to be cleansed; and he also was allowed to fall into Satan's hand to be sifted. But from that sifting he came a new man, cleansed and enriched. Many of David's sweetest songs received their inspiration from the experience of his fall and eclipse, and from the painful chastening he endured. In every matured life, however many the noble qualities, there are also many faults and defects bound up with the good. For example, one has firmness, and firmness is a good quality; but it is yet a very chaffy firmness. Some of it is stubbornness; part is selfish pride; part is most unamiable obstinacy. There is a good element there, but there is also much chaff which must be blown away before it can be noble, Christlike firmness. By and by, when mid-life has come, and when the defects have been sifted out, you will see a firmness stable as a rock, yet gentle as the heart of a little child. It has been cleansed of its chaff in the gusts of trial, and is now pure, golden wheat. Or there is pride in the character. It makes a man arrogant, self-willed, haughty. But pride is not altogether an evil quality. It has in it an element of nobleness. It is the consciousness of dignity, of Divine birthright, of power. As it appears, however, in early years, there is much in it that is offensive and bad. The man must be winnowed until the unlovely qualities are removed, till the arrogance and the selfwill are gone. At length you see the old man, after many experiences of trial and pain, lordly and regal still, but gentle, humble, benevolent, with a sweet spirit, using his noble gifts for lowly service, with his fine hands washing the feet of humble disciples. Pride has not been destroyed; it has been sifted, cleansed, and sanctified. Or take gentleness; even this quality, beautiful as it is, may be very chaffy. It may be weakness; it may be the absence of firmness, mixed up with timidity and want of strong moral principle. The gentleness is golden, but the defects must be got out. Take, once more, what we call temper. A man is easily provoked, swept away by sudden gusts of anger. Now, temper itself is not a bad quality. It is not to be destroyed, as we sometimes say. Without temper a bar of steel becomes like lead. A man without temper is weak and worthless. We are to learn self-control. A strong person is one who has a strong temper under perfect mastery. These are simple illustrations of the sifting which Peter experienced. Every one has, in greater or less degree, to pass through the same processes in some way. Sometimes the separation and cleansing go on quietly and gradually, under the kindly culture of the Spirit. Sometimes afflictions are God's messengers—sickness, or sorrow, or pain. Sometimes temptation is necessary, the buffeting of Satan. All of us have in us by nature, even after

regeneration, much that is unlovely, much that can never enter heaven, and must in some way be got out of us. In Guido's painting of "Michael and the Dragon" the archangel stands upon the fallen foe, holding a drawn sword, victorious and supreme; but the monster beneath him yet lives. It cowers and writhes. It dares not lift up its head, but it is not yet slain. This is a symbol of the conquest of grace over the old nature in the best of us. It is not dead, though under our feet; and this old evil must be got out. The process may be long and painful, but Christ is looking on, and every experience of sifting should leave us a little purer. Thus it is that even our falls, if we are Christ's, make us holier. Evil habits conquered become germs of character. An old man sat dreaming one day about his past, regretting his mistakes and follies, and wishing he had never committed them. He made a list on paper of twenty things in his life of which he was ashamed, and was about to seize an imaginary sponge and rub them all out of his biography, thinking how much more beautiful his character would have been if they had not been committed. But to his amazement he found that if there were any golden threads running through his life, they had been wrought there by the regrets felt at wrongs; and that, if he should wipe out these wrong acts, he would destroy at the same time whatever of nobleness or beauty there was in his character. He found that he had got all his best things out of his errors, with the regret and the repenting which followed. There is a deep truth here—that our mistakes and our sins, if we repent of them, will help in the growth and upbuilding of our character. We can make wrong the seed of right and righteousness. We can transmute error into wisdom. We can make sorrows bloom into a thousand forms like fragrant flowers. Our very falls, through the grace and tender love of Christ, become new births to our souls. In the hot fires of penitence we leave the dross, and come forth as pure gold. But we must remember that it is only Christ who can make our sins yield blessing. (*Ibid.*) *St. Peter's sifting and conversion*:—1. The secret may be told in a few words. The cause and spring of the most obvious defects in the apostle's character was that large and assured confidence in himself which made him so quick to speak, so prompt to act. But, throughout Scripture, as in human nature, self-confidence is opposed to faith or confidence in God. Everywhere, too, we are told that God dwells only in the humble, lowly, contrite heart. So that if God was to take up His abode with Peter, if the impulsive and vehement strength of the man was to be schooled into steadfastness and hallowed by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, in order that, being himself divinely moved and led, he might rightly lead the Apostolic Company during those first critical months in which the foundations of the Church were laid, then, obviously, his self-confidence must be purged out of him, and replaced by the humility with which God delights to dwell. On no other terms could he be fitted for the work to which he was called. And therefore it was that Satan "obtained" him—obtained, *i.e.*, permission to sift and purge self-trust out of him. If the process was severe, the task and honour for which it prepared him were great; and greatness is not to be achieved on easy terms. It is a cruel spectacle, one of the saddest on which the stars have ever looked down—a brave man turned coward, a true man turned liar, a strong man weeping bitterly over the very sin which of all sins might well have seemed impossible to him! But would anything short of this open and shameful fall, this fracture at his strongest point, have sufficed to purge him of that self-confidence which we have seen to be so potent and so active in him up to the very instant of his fall? And if nothing else would have so suddenly and sharply sifted it out of him, and wrought into him the humility which fitted him to receive the Holy Ghost and to found the Church which Christ was about to redeem with His precious blood, shall we complain of the severity of the process by which he was purged from a dangerous self-trust and made meet for a task so honourable and blessed? Shall we not rather ask that we too may be sifted even by the most searching trials, if we too may thus be made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and be qualified for a Divine service? 2. So far, then, we have seen how Satan obtained Peter, that he might sift him. But if Satan obtained, Christ *prayed* for him, and even *obtained* him in a far higher sense; for He obtained that Peter should *only* be "sifted," and that the sifting should issue in his "conversion." It is to this second part of the process that we have now to turn our thoughts; for the conversion of the apostle was no less gradual, and no less complete and wonderful, than his fall. Event meets and answers event, false steps are retrod, broken threads are taken up and worked in, triumphs of faith are set over against failures in faith, denials are retrieved by confessions; the evil in the man is sifted out of him, the good cultivated, consoli-

dated, made permanent; and in and through all this strange and mingled discipline we see the grace of God at work to prepare him for the most honourable service and the highest blessedness. Let us be sure, then, that God has a plan for us no less than for Peter, a plan which dominates all our fugitive impulses, and changeable passions, and broken purposes, and unconnected deeds. Our lives are not the accidental and purposeless fragments they often seem to us to be. God is so disposing them as that we may be sifted from all evil, converted to all goodness, His end for us being that we may become perfect and entire, lacking nothing. (*S. Coz, D.D.*) *Satan's prayer, and Christ's*.—Three parties are before us in these words—three parties to a crisis—the sinner, the sinner's friend, and the sinner's foe. A conflict is revealed to us—a conflict between two of the parties with reference to the third. The conflict is a conflict of prayer. It is by prayer that the great rivals strive for the mastery. Of the two prayers, that of Satan is first in order. The adversary speaks first, and makes his request. Jesus follows him. The suit of Jesus is founded upon the adversary's demand, and is shaped accordingly. There is the prayer of Satan, and then there is the counter-prayer of our Lord. How fares it with the two requests? The answer is favourable—favourable to both. Is Satan's prayer granted? It is. Yes! Satan succeeds in his application, and Peter is handed over to him to be sifted as wheat. It is easy to discover the reason. He might boast that if he had been allowed to subject Peter to the ordeal Jesus would not have been able to carry Peter safely through; and that, if he had been suffered to try, he could have plucked the sheep from the Shepherd's hands. It is necessary that Satan's defeat be directly and manifestly the work of Christ. The prayers, then, are granted. Let us see what their import is. Satan's request is, that he may be allowed to tempt Peter. He expresses his desire to have Peter, that he may sift him as wheat. He would sift him as wheat; that is, in the same way. Wheat is sifted by being shaken up and down. He would sift Peter by the shock and agitation of great and sudden trials. He would sift him as wheat; that is, for the same purpose. Wheat is sifted that it may be known what amount of wheat there is, and what amount of chaff, as well as for other reasons. He would sift Peter, in order to show what measure of genuine faith is in him, and perhaps to show that no true faith is in him, and that Peter himself, with his great professions, is chaff entirely, and not wheat at all! What now is the prayer of Jesus? Does it betray any fear? It might seem to betray fear, if it were that Satan's request should be denied. But He prays not that the trial may not come. What, then, does Jesus pray for? "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." His request is that Peter's faith may not be wholly or finally overcome. It is that Peter may not have too little faith for the emergency that is at hand to keep him from being an apostate and a castaway. The Saviour has a glorious purpose with reference to the serpent. He means to plant His own foot on the serpent, and to bruise his head. Let us now deduce some lessons from the scene which has been surveyed. These prayers may afford us much instruction. 1. For one thing, we learn somewhat of the malice of the devil. He knows nothing of love or pity. 2. But if the malice of the devil appears, so do the love and compassion of Jesus. The contrast between them is beautiful. The spectacle of Satan praying against Peter and Jesus praying for him brings out in strong relief the kindness of the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. The sympathy of Jesus is also here exemplified. 3. Again, there is a lesson here, that ought not to be lost upon us, respecting the craft and hypocrisy of Satan. In the very presence of God we find him trying to hide his malice under cover of something like a zeal for uprightness and truth. His insinuation is that Peter's religion is but a pretence; and he would fain appear as a friend of truth, who is prepared to show this if he is allowed. His motive, forsooth, is less to do harm to Peter than simply to unmask him for the sake of truth, and to prove him to be what he really is. He does not want to corrupt Peter's mind; oh, no! He would merely show it to be corrupt already! But there is a lesson, on the other hand, to encourage and comfort us. Jesus is watchful, and Jesus is wise. 4. One lesson more. We may learn the excellence of faith. Mark the testimony of the Saviour Himself: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." And we have not the testimony of Jesus alone. We have Satan's involuntary tribute to this capital grace. It was the faith of the apostle that he was about to assail, and, if possible, to extinguish. Peter had signalized himself by his faith. It was his faith that produced his renowned confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The confession was gall and wormwood to Satan; he could not

forget or forgive it; and he denounced, in his rage, and determined to strike at, the faith from which it sprang. He dislikes, and he fears, the faith of God's people. And not without reason. It is faith that unites us to Christ, and keeps up the communication with His fulness. If the foe can but break that blessed bond of connection, he will have us for his own. (*A. Gray.*) *Satan's power is limited*.—1. The Bible doctrine of Satan's existence is strikingly corroborated by the devilish in society. 2. His existence has been revealed in mercy to us. 3. He has the will to destroy us, but not the power. 4. He is ever active. 5. We are saved from his cruel and hellish hate by the intercession of Christ. (*Anon.*) *I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.*—*Christ's prayer for Peter*.—I. The ESSENTIAL FACTS involved in the occurrence. 1. It was an hour full of trial and danger for all the disciples. 2. Peter especially was in danger. 3. Christ prayed, not simply for them all, but for Peter particularly and personally. 4. The specific point in his spiritual condition to which the prayer was directed, was the preservation of his "faith." 5. Christ also advised him of all the facts in the case—of the greatness of the peril, the source of it, and the duty of the hour. II. The PRACTICAL TRUTHS it teaches for all time. 1. Christ really interposes to save His people when in peril. 2. He intercedes for particular persons. 3. Christ's intercessions go into effect only through the moral or spiritual state of the disciple. 4. Faith is the special element of the Christian's security. 5. Christ's prayers, as well as His design and desire, as to each one, look beyond the individual to others. "Strengthen thy brethren." 6. Christ's intercessions are not in vain, but take effect even when they seem to fail. (*M. Valentine, D.D.*) *Divine help in temptation*.—Now, what the Lord said to Peter, He still virtually says to all His people: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." When Mrs. Winslow was bereaved of an affectionate husband, deprived of fortune, and in a strange land, and friends far away, "The enemy," she said, "seemed to sift me as wheat. I would steal away and weep in agony, for I lost my hold and confidence in Him who had said, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' This buffeting of the adversary, however, was but for a season, for afterwards, through the helpful grace of her Lord, her faith revived, and she was able to say, 'He is all and everything He said He would be. He is my joy by night and by day, my stay in trouble, my strength in weakness, the lifter-up of my head, my portion for ever. God be praised! God be praised!'" Not less touching is the recorded conflict and triumph of a young disciple. A Christian mother, not long ago, finding, as she sat beside her dying boy, that Satan had been dealing with him, said, "Does he ever trouble you, George?" "Oh yes; he has been very busy with me, especially when I have been weak, telling me I was too great a sinner and could not be saved." "And what did you say?" "I told him I had a great Saviour"; and then he added, "I think the tempter is nearly done with me now." Some weeks before his death he had been saying, "There is light in the valley"; and turning to his mother, he said very solemnly, "Ah, it would be a dark valley without a light!" On the last day of his life she said to him, "Is there light in the valley now, George?" "Oh, yes, yes!" And when further asked, "Is Satan done with you now?" "Well, I think he is almost. He is lurking near, however; but Jesus is nearer." (*R. Macdonald, D.D.*) *Christ's praying for Peter*.—In this adversative but, there is a threefold antithesis or opposition, which may be here observed and taken notice of by us. First, an opposition of the persons, Christ against Satan. It is the devil that assaults, but it is the Saviour that labours to divert it. And there is a great matter in this—a potent assistant is a great encouragement against a potent assailant. Now, thus is Christ, in comparison of Satan. He has the greater prevalency with Him, especially in approaches to God, and the requests which He makes to Him for His people. The second is, the opposition of actions or performances, praying against desiring. Satan has but desired, yea, but Christ has prayed. But He chooses rather here to do it by prayer, that He might hereby sanctify this performance to us, and show us the efficacy of it as to the vanquishing of temptations themselves. The third is, the opposition of success, establishment against circumvention. Satan has desired to have you, but I have so ordered the matter that thy faith shall not fail notwithstanding. His attempts upon thee shall be in vain. Which latter now leads me from the first general part to the second here in the text; to wit, the matter of Christ's prayer, or the thing itself requested by Him in these words, "That thy faith fail not." For the negative—First, to consider that what it is not. Where we may observe that it is not that Peter might have no temptation befall him; that, one would have thought, had been more suitable. When He had said before "Satan

hath desired to have you," we might have expected He should have said next, "but I have prayed that he shall have nothing to do with you." This it pleases God to suffer and permit upon divers considerations. First, for their greater abasement and humiliation. The servants of God are apt sometimes, where grace is not more watchful in them, to be advanced and lifted up in themselves. Secondly, as to breed humility, so also to breed compassion and tenderness of spirit to others. Christians, as they are apt sometimes to be too well opinionated of themselves; so also to be now and then too harsh and rigorous towards their brethren. Thirdly, God suffers His servants to be tempted for the honour of His own grace in supporting them and keeping them up, and for the confusion likewise of the enemy in his attempts upon them. Let us not, then, have our armour to get when our enemy is coming upon us, but be furnished aforehand; and remember that we trust not to any grace which we have already received, but be still labouring and striving for more. The second is the positive part of it in the words of the text, "that thy faith may not fail." To take them absolutely as they lie in themselves, and so they do signify to us the safety of Peter's condition; and, together with him, of all other believers. Their faith, it shall not fail. This, it may be made good unto us from sundry considerations. 1. The nature of grace itself which is an abiding principle. Faith is not a thing taken up, as a man would take up some new fashion or custom, but it is a thing rooted and incorporated in us, and goes through the substance of us, it spreads itself through the whole man, and is, as it were, a new creature in us. 2. The covenant of grace, which is an everlasting covenant. "I will make an everlasting covenant with them" (Jer. xxxii. 40). 3. The spirit of grace, which is not only a worker but an establisher and a sealer of this faith in us, and to us (2 Cor. i. 20). That the servants of God they shall have their faith much upheld in such conditions. We have this implied, that a steadfast faith is a singular help in temptation. Now, the efficacy of faith in temptation is discernable in these particulars—(1) As it pitches us upon the strength and power of God. That which keeps up a soul in temptation, it is an almighty power, it is a power which is above all the powers of darkness itself. (2) Faith helps in temptation as it lays hold upon the promises of God. (3) As it lays hold upon Christ, and pitches us, and fastens us upon Him, we are so far safe and sure in temptation, as Christ has any hold of us and we of Him. When the stability of a Christian is said to depend upon the prayers of Christ, this is exclusive of any virtue or merit of their own. The consideration of this doctrine is very much still for the comfort of believers, as to this particular. They may from hence, in the use of good means, be very confident, and persuaded of their perseverance, because they have Christ praying for them. And there are two things in this that make for them. The one is, as I said, first, the acceptance which Christ is sure to have with His Father. Secondly, As there is Christ's acceptance, so the constancy of His interceding for us. If Christ should only pray for us sometimes we might seem to be no longer upon sure terms, than such times as He prayed for us; "but now He ever liveth to make intercession for us." (J. Horton, D.D.) When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.—Peter helped by his fall to strengthen his brethren:—I. On the first view of such a crime as Peter's, we should suppose THAT ALL HIS INFLUENCE OVER HIS BRETHREN, ALL HIS ABILITY TO DO GOOD, HIS CAPACITY TO IMPART STRENGTH TO OTHERS, WERE LOST, AND THAT FOR EVER. At the most, he could only hope to be forgiven, and to live as an unnoticed believer, brooding in the shade over his ingratitude and content to take an obscure place during the remainder of his life. For consider in what position he would now be placed. 1. First his own shame would naturally bring with it a sense of weakness, and would furnish a good reason for concentrating his efforts upon himself. 2. His brethren in such a case would naturally lower their opinion of him. 3. His brethren would naturally feel that a man of such glaring sins was not the man to be put foremost in their efforts to do good outside of the Church. II. But, notwithstanding all this, it may be true, under a system of grace, that THE MANIFESTATION OF CHARACTER WHICH IS MADE BY A PARTICULAR SIN MAY TURN INTO A BLESSING TO HIM WHO IS ALLOWED TO FALL INTO IT. In this case it is not sin, but an outward sin that is the source of good, and this is accomplished, not in the ordinary course of things, but through the grace of the gospel. Of two persons in the same moral condition before the eye of God one may be untempted and so far forth innocent, while the other yields to a temptation, before which the first also would have fallen, had it been allowed to assail him. Now I say in such a case as this the outward sin may under the gospel be made a blessing to him who commits it; nay, more,

the blessing may extend beyond himself to all around him. He may become a wiser, better, stronger Christian than he was before. 1. And this will be made apparent, if we consider that in this way he arrives at a better knowledge of his own character and is impressively warned against his own faults. 2. But secondly, a person who is thus recovered from his sins has the practical power derived from a renewed hope of forgiveness. 3. A person in Peter's condition appeals to the affections of the Church, and he has a closer hold upon them than if he had never become a kind of representative of Divine grace. (*T. D. Woolsey.*) *The ministry of a converted man*:—I. JESUS EMPLOYS CONVERTED SOULS TO DO HIS WORK. The testimony of living men glorifies Christ. II. A CONVERTED MAN CAN GIVE A REASON FOR HIS FAITH. A workman who has been employed in the manufacture of machinery is best able to explain the principles and manner of its work. III. A CONVERTED MAN CAN SPEAK CONFIDENTLY. IV. A CONVERTED MAN SPEAKS WITH SYMPATHY, AS NO ONE ELSE CAN. Learn—1. The strength of the ministry. 2. Grace is given to be employed for others. 3. We must use means, and be very diligent in the use of them, if we would strengthen our brethren. (*Canon Fremantle.*) *Second conversion*:—I. WHAT IS MEANT BY SECOND CONVERSION. It implies that there has been a first conversion; that is, a principle of true piety has been implanted in the bosom, but it has hitherto been there in a weak, imperfect form. The heart has been changed, but the change is superficial and defective. The repentance is sincere, but not deep and thorough. The faith is real, but not strong and controlling. The love is genuine, but inconstant and feeble. And so of all the Christian graces; they exist in him who has had a first conversion, but in an imperfect, partially developed state, weak, unstable, unsymmetrical, and bearing but little fruit in the life. Now the effect of a second conversion is to take the subject out of this low, inadequate, and ineffective state of piety, and raise him higher, and make him more faithful in the Divine life. The antecedents of this change are often very similar to those that precede first conversion. It commences in a serious, scrutinizing view of one's spiritual state and prospects. The subject of this change becomes dissatisfied with his present type of religion. As he passes through this second conversion as I call it, he seems to himself to enter into a new spiritual region. He sees Divine things in a clearer and more affecting light than he ever did before. II. ITS REALITY AS A MATTER OF EXPERIENCE. The apostles before and after Pentecost. Through the gift of the Spirit they rose to holier love, to a more spiritual faith and hope in Christ, and to a greater consecration to His service. The late Dr. Judson, of the Burmah Baptist Mission, after he had been years in his field of labour, earnestly engaged in his work, and no doubt as a true Christian man, experienced a change in his religious feelings and views which, in all its essential elements, may properly be regarded as a second conversion, and which gave a new impulse and a new power, as well as a greatly increased spirituality, and joy, and hope, to the whole of his subsequent life. The late Judge Reeve, of Litchfield, furnishes another remarkable example illustrating the point now under consideration. For many years after he professed religion he was satisfied to keep up the usual routine of religious observances, but with little of the life and enjoyment of a clear, indwelling spirit of piety. Then he passed through a great and most decided change in his Christian experience and character, in which he felt as if old things had indeed passed away, and all things had become new to him. From that time till the close of his life he enjoyed great nearness to God and peace of mind, and his path became like that of the sun, shining more and more unto the perfect day. III. WHY A SECOND CONVERSION IS NECESSARY TO PREPARE ONE TO BE TRULY AND EMINENTLY USEFUL IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, or in promoting the spiritual good of others. 1. It is necessary because first conversion is often very superficial. It does indeed change the heart and turn the affections towards God and Divine things; but the whole inner man is far from being subdued to the obedience of Christ. Much land remains yet to be possessed. 2. A second conversion is often necessary to bring the soul into a nearer union and a deeper sympathy with Christ. 3. This second conversion of which I speak, brings those who are the subjects of it to see and feel the miserable condition of such as are out of Christ and perishing in sin. 4. Second conversion qualifies those who are the subjects of it, to do good in the most acceptable and successful manner. It begets a new spirit of humility, tenderness, and love in the soul; gives tone to the voice and look to the eye, imparts an aspect of benevolence and kindness to the whole manner and style of address, and makes it entirely apparent, when attempting to do good to others, to converse with them for example on the subject of personal

religion, that you are moved to it by real concern for their salvation. This, beyond anything else, disarms opposition, subdues prejudice, gives access to the heart and conscience, and is well-nigh sure to render your efforts successful. 5. When the heart is deeply imbued with the feelings implied in second conversion, God's presence may be expected to be with you, to guide and crown with success your endeavours to do good to others. (*J. Hawes, D.D.*) *Conversion and strengthening*:—I. CONVERSION. 1. The essential, primary idea is that of a corporeal turning round, without anything to limit it. But to this original notion, which is inseparable from the word, usage in many cases adds certain accessory notions. One of these is, the idea of turning in a definite direction; that is, towards a certain object. The difference is that between a wheel's turning on its axis and a flower turning towards the sun. But in some connections there is a still further accession to the primary idea; so that the words necessarily suggest, not the mere act of turning, nor the act of turning in a definite direction, but the act of turning from one object to another, which are then, of course, presented in direct antithesis to one another. Thus the magnetic needle, if mechanically pointed towards the south, is no sooner set at liberty than it will turn from that point to the north. In this case, however, there is still another accessory motion added to the simple one of turning, namely, that of turning back to a point from which it had before been turned away. And this idea of return or retroversion may, of course, be repeated without limit, and without any further variation of the meaning of the term used, which is still the same, whether the turning back be for the first or second, tenth or hundredth time. All these distinctions or gradations may be traced also in the spiritual uses of the term. As thus applied, conversion is a change of character, that is, of principles and affections, with a corresponding change of outward life. Now, such a change may be conceived of, as a vague, unsettled, frequently repeated revolution of the views and feelings, without any determinate character or end. But the conversion spoken of in Scripture is relieved from this indefiniteness by a constant reference to one specific object to which the convert turns. It is to God that all conversion is described as taking place. But how, in what sense, does man turn to God? The least and lowest that can be supposed to enter into this conception is, a turning to God, as an object of attention or consideration—turning, as it were, for the first time to look at Him, just as we might turn towards any object of sense which had before escaped attention or been out of sight. 2. Sometimes, again, the idea is suggested that we not only turn to God, but turn back to Him. This may at first sight appear inconsistent with the fact just stated, that our first affections are invariably given to the world and to ourselves. But even those who are converted, for the first time, from a state of total alienation, may be said to turn back to God, in reference to the great original apostasy in which we are all implicated. As individuals, we never know God till we are converted. As a race, we have all departed from Him, and conversion is but turning back to Him. But this expression is still more appropriate, even in its strict sense, to the case of those who have already been converted, and are only reclaimed from a partial and temporary alienation, from relapsing into sin, or what is called, in religious phraseology, declension, and, in the Word of God itself, backsliding. That the term conversion may be properly applied to such a secondary restoration, is apparent from the language of the text, where it is used by Christ Himself, of one who is expressly said to have had faith, and faith which did not absolutely fail. II. Conversion tends to the STRENGTHENING OF OTHERS. In answer to the question, How does conversion tend to this result? the general fact may be thus resolved into three distinct particulars: 1. It enables men to strengthen others. 2. It obliges men to strengthen others. 3. It disposes men to strengthen others. The convert is enabled to confirm or rescue others by his knowledge of their character and state. He knows, not only what he sees in them, but what he feels or has felt in himself. He knows the difficulties of the restoration—how much harder it is now to excite hope or confirm faith, how much less effective either warning, or encouragement, or argument is now than it once was—how precarious even the most specious reformation and repentance must be after such defections. This advantage of experimental knowledge is accompanied, moreover, by a corresponding liveliness of feeling, a more energetic impulse, such as always springs from recent restorations or escapes. Out of this increased ability arises, by a logical and moral necessity, a special obligation. This is only a specific application of a principle which all acknowledge, and which the Word of God explicitly propounds, "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth

it not, to him it is sin." It needs not so much to be explained or established, as to be exemplified from real life. The recognition of the principle is there unhesitating and unanimous. He who has been recovered from the power of a desperate disease by a new or unknown remedy, is under a peculiar obligation to apply it, or at least to make it known, to all affected in like manner. Hence the unsparring, universal condemnation of the man who, from mercenary motives, holds in his possession secrets of importance to the health or happiness of others. He who is mercifully saved from shipwreck, often feels especially incumbent on himself the rescue of his fellows. He must do what he can even though he be exhausted; how much more if he is strengthened. The heart must beat in concord with the reason and the conscience. And it does so in the case of the true convert. (*J. A. Alexander, D.D.*)

Strengthening the brethren.—That the brethren may be weak in faith, in love, in humility, and in some departments of Christian duty, is clearly implied in the command to strengthen them. But this cannot be done by abandoning them. How, then, can it be accomplished? 1. By being always in the place, and punctually discharging the duty which the Lord requires of you, according to your covenant. 2. By the spirituality of those who are turned from any particular course of sinfulness. 3. The brethren may be strengthened by our meekness, and other mild graces. 4. Nor should this work of strengthening the brethren, be a matter of mere contingency. It must be undertaken systematically. Each Christian should adopt a system of doing good, and carry it out in all the branches of a Christian life. 5. He should strengthen them, by meeting with them in circles for prayer. 6. He will also encourage them, by praying for them. 7. He will encourage them by his conversation. (*J. Foot, D.D.*)

Peter after his restoration.—I. First, it is his DUTY. He has gone astray, and he has been brought back; what better can he do than to strengthen his brethren? 1. He will thus help to undo the evil which he has wrought. Peter must have staggered his brethren. 2. Besides, how can you better express your gratitude to God than by seeking to strengthen your weak brethren when you have been strengthened yourself? 3. Do you not think, too, that this becomes our duty, because, doubtless, it is a part of the Divine design? Never let us make a mistake by imagining that God's grace is given to a man simply with an eye to himself. 4. By the way, the very wording of the text seems to suggest the duty: we are to strengthen our "brethren." We must do so in order that we may manifest brotherly love, and thus prove our sonship towards God. 5. Let us see to it, dear friends, if we have been restored, that we try to look after our weak brethren, that we may show forth a zeal for the honour and glory of our Lord. When we went astray we dishonoured Christ. II. Now secondly, HE HAS A QUALIFICATION FOR IT. This Peter is the man who, when he is brought back again, can strengthen his brethren. 1. He can strengthen them by telling them of the bitterness of denying his Master. He went out and wept bitterly. 2. Again, Peter was the man to tell another of the weakness of the flesh, for he could say to him, "Do not trust yourself." 3. But he was also qualified to bear his personal witness to the power of his Lord's prayer. He could never forget that Jesus had said to him, "I have prayed for thee." 4. And could not Peter speak about the love of Jesus to poor wanderers? 5. And could not Peter fully describe the joy of restoration? III. And now, lastly, the restored believer should strengthen his brethren, because IT WILL BE SUCH A BENEFIT TO HIMSELF. He will derive great personal benefit from endeavouring to cherish and assist the weak ones in the family of God. 1. Brother, do this continually and heartily, for thus you will be made to see your own weakness. 2. But what a comfort it must have been to Peter to have such a charge committed to him! 3. And, brethren, whenever any of you lay yourselves out to strengthen weak Christians, as I pray you may, you will get benefit from what you do in the holy effort. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Christ's command to Peter.—1. Here is an enlargement of personal conversion, to fraternal or brotherly confirmation. He that is converted himself, he must strengthen his brethren. And that in divers respects—(1) In a way of faithfulness, as closing with that end for which they are converted themselves. The reason why God does bestow such a measure of grace or comfort upon this or that particular Christian, it is not for himself only, but for others, that so they may be so much the better, or comfortabler for his sake. (2) In a way of thankfulness, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren"; upon this account likewise, we cannot better testify our acknowledgments of God's goodness, in the bestowing of grace or comfort upon our own souls, than by imparting and communicating it to others. True thankfulness, it hath, for the most part, joy with it. (3) Out of zeal to the

glory of God. We should endeavour others' conversion, that so God may have more glory by it. The more that sinners are converted, the more is God honoured. (4) Out of love to ourselves and our own good. The more we strengthen others, the more indeed do we confirm ourselves, whether in grace or comfort. This oil, it increases in the spending; and this bread in the breaking of it. And to him that thus hath, it shall be given. This is done divers ways, as—(a) By discovering and laying open the flights of sin, and the subtilties of the spiritual enemy. (b) By quickening and exciting and stirring up one another to good, we do hereby strengthen our brethren. There is nothing does more strengthen men in goodness, than the practice of goodness. (c) By imparting and communicating of our own experiences, we do hereby likewise strengthen our brethren; when we shall show them what good we ourselves have found by such and such good courses. This is a means not only to draw on, but to confirm others with us. To help us, and enable us hereunto, we must labour especially for such graces as are conducing to the practice of it, as—(1) A spirit of discerning, whereby to judge aright of the case and condition which our brethren are in. It is a great part of skill in a physician, to be able to find out the disease, and to know the just temper and constitution of his patient's body; and so is it also for a healer of souls. (2) A spirit of love and tenderness and condescension. There is a great deal of meekness required in a spiritual strengthener and restorer (Gal. vi. 2). (3) A spirit of faith, whereby we do believe ourselves those things which we commend to others. 2. The confinement of brotherly confirmation to personal conversion. He that will strengthen his brethren, he must himself be first of all converted. Peter, till himself be converted, he cannot confirm or strengthen his brethren, whether in comfort or grace. When we say, he cannot do it, this holds good according to the notion of a threefold impossibility which is in it. (1) In regard of the performance; he cannot strengthen his brethren in this respect, who is himself unconverted. The reason of it is this: because persons in such a condition, they are devoid of those graces which are requisite to such a performance. (2) Cannot do it, in regard of acceptance; God will not take it so well from him, in his making and pretending to do it; neither is it altogether so satisfactory to men. (3) Cannot, in regard of success. He that is himself unconverted and unexperienced in his own heart, he cannot speak so profitably to others, and to the good of their souls. Nothing goes to the heart so much as that which comes from it. (*J. Horton, D.D.*)

Ver. 33. Both to prison and to death.—*Religious emotion*:—That violent impulse is not the same as a firm determination—that men may have their religious feelings roused, without being on that account at all the more likely to obey God in practice, rather the less likely. As a general rule, the more religious men become, the calmer they become; and at all times the religious principle, viewed by itself, is calm, sober, and deliberate. Let us review some of the accidental circumstances I speak of. 1. The natural tempers of men vary very much. Some men have ardent imaginations and strong feelings; and adopt, as a matter of course, a vehement mode of expressing themselves. No doubt it is impossible to make all men think and feel alike. Such men of course may possess deep-rooted principle. All I would maintain is, that their ardour does not of itself make their faith deeper and more genuine; that they must not think themselves better than others on account of it; that they must be aware of considering it a proof of their real earnestness, instead of narrowly searching into their conduct for the satisfactory fruits of faith. 2. Next, there are, besides, particular occasions on which excited feeling is natural, and even commendable; but not for its own sake, but on account of the peculiar circumstances under which it occurs. For instance, it is natural for a man to feel especial remorse at his sins when he first begins to think of religion; he ought to feel bitter sorrow and keen repentance. But all such emotion evidently is not the highest state of a Christian's mind; it is but the first stirring of grace in him. A sinner, indeed, can do no better; but in proportion as he learns more of the power of true religion, such agitation will wear away. The woman who had been a sinner, when she came behind our Lord wept much, and washed His feet with tears. It was well done in her; she did what she could; and was honoured with our Saviour's praise. Yet it is clear this was not a permanent state of mind. It was but the first step in religion, and would doubtless wear away. It was but the accident of a season. Had her faith no deeper root than this emotion, it would soon have come to an end, as Peter's zeal. 3. And further, the accidents of life will occasionally

agitate us—affliction and the pain; bad news; though here, too, the Psalmist describes the higher excellence of mind, viz., the calm confidence of the believer, who “will not be afraid of any evil tidings, for his heart standeth fast, and believeth in the Lord.” In times of distress religious men will speak more openly on the subject of religion, and lay bare their feelings; at other times they will conceal them. They are neither better nor worse for so doing. Now all this may be illustrated from Scripture. We find the same prayers offered, and the same resolutions expressed by good men, sometimes in a calm way, sometimes with more ardour. Observe how calm Job is in his resignation: “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” And on the other hand, how calmly that same apostle expresses his assurance of salvation at the close of his life, who, during the struggle, was accidentally agitated:—“I am now ready to be offered. . . . I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.” These remarks may suffice to show the relation which excited feelings bear to true religious principle. They are sometimes natural, sometimes suitable; but they are not religion itself. They come and go. They will gradually lose their place within us as our obedience becomes confirmed—partly because those men are kept in perfect peace, and sheltered from all agitating feelings, whose minds are stayed on God; partly because these feelings themselves are fixed into habits by the power of faith, and instead of coming and going, and agitating the mind from their suddenness, they are permanently retained so far as there is anything good in them, and give a deeper colour and a more energetic expression to the Christian character. Now, it will be observed, that in these remarks I have taken for granted, as not needing proof, that the highest Christian temper is free from all vehement and tumultuous feeling. But, if we wish some evidence of this, let us turn to our Great Pattern, Jesus Christ, and examine what was the character of that perfect holiness which He alone of all men ever displayed. And can we find anywhere such calmness and simplicity as marked His devotion and His obedience? When does He ever speak with fervour or vehemence? Consider the prayer He gave us; and this is the more to the purpose, for the very reason that He has given it as a model for our worship. How plain and unadorned is it! How few are the words of it! How grave and solemn the petitions? What an entire absence of tumult and feverish emotion! To conclude: Let us take warning from St. Peter’s fall. Let us not promise much; let us not talk much of ourselves; let us not be high-minded, nor encourage ourselves in impetuous bold language in religion. (*J. H. Newman, D.D.*)

Vers. 39–46. The mount of Olives.—*The mount of Olives*:—The mountains are Nature’s monuments. Like the islands that dwell apart, and like them that give asylum from a noisy and irreverent world. Many a meditative spirit has found in their silence leisure for the longest thought, and in their Patmos-like seclusion the brightest visions and largest projects have evolved; whilst by a sort of over-mastering attraction they have usually drawn to themselves the most memorable incidents which variegate our human history. And, as they are the natural haunts of the highest spirits, and the appropriate scenes of the most signal occurrences, so they are the noblest cenotaphs. I. OLIVET REMINDS US OF THE SAVIOUR’S PITY FOR SUCH AS PERISH (see Luke xix. 37–44). That tear fell from an eye which had looked into eternity, and knew the worth of souls. II. THE MOUNT OF OLIVES REMINDS US OF THE REDEEMER’S AGONY TO SAVE. III. The Mount of Olives is identified with the supplications and intercessions of Immanuel, and so suggests to us the Lord Jesus as THE GREAT EXAMPLE IN PRAYER. 1. Submission in prayer. In praying for His people, the Mediator’s prayer was absolute: “Father, *I will*.” But in praying for Himself, how altered was the language! “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.” 2. Perseverance in prayer. The evangelist tells that there was one prayer which Jesus offered three times, and from the Epistle to the Hebrews v. 7, we find that this prayer prevailed. 3. The best preparation for trial is habitual prayer. Long before it became the scene of His agony, Gethsemane had been the Saviour’s oratory. “He oftentimes resorted thither.” IV. The Mount of Olives recalls to us THE SAVIOUR’S AFFECTION FOR HIS OWN. I fear that the love of Christ is little credited even by those who have some faith in His finished work, and some attachment to His living person. (*James Hamilton.*) **Being in an agony.**—*Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane*:—Jesus commenced His sacred Passion in the garden for these reasons: I. BECAUSE HE INTENDED TO OBSERVE A PIOUS CUSTOM. 1. It was His custom, after He had preached

and wrought miracles, to retire and betake Himself to prayer. 2. It should be our custom, too, to recollect ourselves in prayer, especially when the day's work is over.

II. BECAUSE CHARITY AND OBEDIENCE URGED HIM. 1. Charity towards the master of the house, who, having left the supper-room at His disposal, should not be molested by the seizure of Jesus. 2. Love and obedience to His heavenly Father. **III. IN ORDER TO FULFIL THE TYPE OF DAVID.** When Absalom had revolted against his father, David and the people went over the brook Kedron, and they all wept with a loud voice. Christ went over the same brook now, accompanied by His faithful friends. **IV. AS SECOND ADAM HE WOULD MAKE SATISFACTION IN A GARDEN FOR THE SIN OF THE FIRST ADAM WHICH HAD BEEN COMMITTED IN A GARDEN.** (*J. Marchant.*)

Gethsemane:—Now let us look at this scene of pain and agony in the life of Christ, and see what lessons it supplies to us. And I remark—I. IT WAS SOLITARY SUFFERING. "He was removed from them." He was alone. How weird and sombre the word! How it throbs with painful life! And does not your experience substantiate the same thing? What a recital you could give of pain, and sorrow, and heart-ache, and stern conflict you have borne and sustained in solitude into which your dearest earthly friend must not enter. But I remark further that this scene in the life of Jesus was one of—**II. INTENSE SUFFERING.** It is an hour of supreme agony! The betrayer is at hand, the judgment hall, the mockery, the ribald jeers of the populace, the desertion of His friends, the false charges of His enemies, the shame and pain of the cross are just before Him. The bitterness of death is upon Him.

III. EARNEST PRAYER. "He prayed the more earnestly." What! Christ pray? Did He need the help of this provision of the Infinite Father to meet the exigencies of sinful dependent man? Yes, the Man Jesus needed to exercise this gift. It was the human Christ that was suffering. Prayer is an arrangement in the economy of infinite wisdom and goodness to meet the daily needs of human lives. But see again, in this time of great suffering there is—**IV. DEVOUT SUBMISSION TO THE DIVINE WILL.** "Nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done." Christ here reveals a force and beauty of character of the highest and most perfect kind. When a man can be thus brought to put himself into harmony with the Divine plan and purpose, so as to say in true submission and surrender, "Thy will be done," he gets to the very heart of the saint's "higher life" on earth; this is about as full a "sanctification" as can be attained this side heaven. This is one of the grandest, the greatest, and hardest, yet the sweetest and most restful prayers I know. "Thy will be done." This prayer touches all things in human life and history from centre to circumference, nothing is left outside its sweep and compass. It is the life of heaven lived on earth—the soul entering into deep and abiding sympathy with the character and will of God, and going out in harmony with the Divine plan to "do and suffer" all His righteous will. What are some of the lessons suggested by this suffering scene in the life of Christ? 1. Every true man has his Gethsemane. It may be an "olive garden," where is everything to minister to the senses, and meet the utmost cravings of the human heart so far as outer things are concerned. Or, it may be out on the bleak unsheltered moor, where the cutting winds and blinding storm of sickness and poverty chill to the very core of his nature; or in any of the intermediate states of life, but come it does. 2. To pass through Gethsemane is a Divine arrangement, a part of God's plan for perfecting human lives. Christ was there not merely because it was His "wont" or habit, but as part of a Divine plan. He was drawn thither by unseen forces, and for a set or definite purpose. It was just as much the will of God as was any other act or scene of His life. 3. To pray for the cup to pass from us should always be subject to Christ's condition, "If it be Thy will." 4. God ever answers true prayer, but not always in the way we ask. Of this we may be sure, that He will either lift us from the Gethsemane of suffering, or strengthen us to bear the trial. 5. In great suffering, submission to the Divine will gains strength for the greater trial beyond. 6. I learn, finally, this grand lesson, that I would by no means miss—that in all, above, and beyond, and through all, the Lord God reigns. (*J. T. Higgins.*)

Jesus in Gethsemane:—I. Upon the very threshold of our lesson lies the weighty truth: **WOE'S BITTEREST CUP SHOULD BE TAKEN WHEN IT IS THE MEANS OF HIGHEST USEFULNESS.** Wasted suffering is the climax of tragedy. Many broken hearts would have lived could it have been clear that the crushing woe was not fruitless. Unspeakable the boon if earth's army of sufferers could rest on the knowledge that their pain was service. **II. FROM OUR LORD'S EXAMPLE WE LEARN THE HELPFULNESS IN SORROW OF RELIANCE UPON HUMAN AND DIVINE COMPANIONSHIP COMBINED.** **III. OUR LORD'S CRUCIAL OBEDIENCE IN THE GARDEN AGONY**

REFLECTS THE MAJESTY OF THE HUMAN WILL AND ITS POSSIBLE MASTERY OF EVERY TRIAL IN PERFECT OBEDIENCE TO THE DIVINE WILL. However superhuman Jesus' suffering, He was thoroughly human in it. He had all our faculties, and used them as we may use ours. It is no small encouragement that the typical Man gives us an example of perfect obedience, at a cost unknown before or since. In the mutual relations of the human and Divine wills all merit is achieved and all character constructed. IV. JESUS' SOUL COULD HAVE BEEN "SORROWFUL EVEN UNTO DEATH" ONLY AS HIS SUFFERINGS WERE VICARIOUS. V. GETHSEMANE'S DARKNESS PAINTS SIN'S GUILT AND RUIN IN FAITHFUL AND ENDURING COLOUR. It is easy to think lightly of sin. VI. GETHSEMANE THROWS PORTENTOUS LIGHT UPON THE WOE OF LOST SOULS. VII. OUR LESSON GIVES TERRIBLE EMPHASIS TO THE FACT AND SERIOUSNESS OF IMPOSSIBILITIES WITH GOD. Our Lord's agonized words, "If it be possible," establish the rigidity and absoluteness of governmental and spiritual conditions. God's will and plans are objective realities; they have definite and all-important direction and demands. (*S. L. B. Spence.*) *The will of God the cure of self-will:*—Awful in its bliss, more awful yet is the will in its decay. Awful power it is, to be able for ourselves to choose God; terrible to be able to refuse Him. We have felt, many of us, the strangeness of the power of will in children; how neither present strength, nor persuasion, nor love, nor hope, nor pain, nor punishment, nor dread of worse, nor weight of authority, can, for a time, bend the determined will of a little child. We are amazed to see a power so strong in a form so slight and a mind so childish. Yet they are faint pictures of ourselves whenever we have sinned wilfully. We marvel at their resisting our wisdom, knowledge, strength, counsel, authority, persuasiveness. What is every sinful sin but a resistance of the wisdom, power, counsel, majesty, eloquent pleadings of Almighty God in the sinner's soul? What is it, but for the soul which He hath made, to will to thwart His counsel who hath made it, to mar His work, to accuse His wisdom of foolishness, His love of want of tenderness, to withdraw itself from the dominion of God, to be another god to itself, a separate principle of wisdom and source of happiness and providence to itself, to order things in its own way, setting before itself and working out its own ends, making self-love, self-exaltation, self-gratification, its object, as though it were, at its will, to shape its own lot as much as if there were no God. Yea, and at last, it must will that there be no God. And in its worst decay, it accomplishes what it wills, and (awful as it is to say) blots God out of its creation, disbelieving that He is, or will do as He has said, or that He will avenge. Whoever wills that God wills not, so far dethrones God, and sets up his own will to dispute the almightiness and wisdom of the eternal God. He is a Deicide. It matters not wherein the self-will is exerted, in the very least things or the greatest. Antichrist will be but the full unhindered growth of self-will. Such was the deep disease of self-will, to cure which our good Lord came, in our nature, to fulfil the Father's will, to will to suffer what the Father willed, to "empty Himself and become obedient unto death, and that the death of the Cross." And since pride was the chief source of disease in our corrupted wills, to heal this, the eternal Son of God came as now from His everlasting glory, and, as a little Child, fulfilled His Father's will. And when He entered on His ministry, the will of His Father was the full contentment, refreshment, stay, reward, of His soul, as Man. And then, whereas the will of God is done either *by* us, in active obedience, or *on* us and *in* us by passive obedience or resignation in suffering, to *suffer* the will of God is the surest, deepest, safest, way to learn to *do* it. For it has least of self. It needeth only to be still, and it reposeth at once in the loving will of God. If we have crippled ourselves, and cannot do great things, we can, at least, meekly bear chastening, hush our souls and be still. Yet since, in trials of this sort, the soul is often perplexed by its very suffering, it may be for your rest, when ye shall be called to God's loving discipline of suffering, to have such simple rules as these. 1. It is not against the will of God even strongly to will if it should be His will, what yet may prove not to be His will. Entire submission to the will of God requireth absolutely these two things. Wholly will whatsoever thou knowest God to will; wholly reject whatsoever thou knowest God willeth not. Beyond these two, while the will of God is as yet not clear unto thee, thou art free. We must indeed, in all our prayers, have written, at least in our hearts, those words spoken by our dear Lord for us, "Not as I will, but as Thou." We shall, in whatever degree God hath conformed our will to His, hold our will in suspense, even while yet uncertain, ready to follow the balance of His gracious will even while we, tremblingly watch its motions, and our dearest earthly hopes, laid therein, seem

ready gradually to sink, for the rest of this life, in dust (2 Sam. xvi. 10). And so thou, too, whatever it be which thou wilt, the health and life of those thou lovest as thine own soul, the turning aside of any threatened scourge of God, the healing of thine aching heart, the cleansing away of harassing thoughts or doubts entailed upon thee by former sin, or coldness, or dryness, or distraction in prayer, or deadness of soul, or absence of spiritual consolation, thou mayest without fear ask it of God with thy whole heart, and will it wholly and earnestly, so that thou wilt therein the glory of God, and, though with sinking heart, welcome the will of God, when thou knowest assuredly what that will is. 2. Nor again is it against the will of God that thou art bowed down and grieved by what is the will of God. And even when the heaviness is for our own private griefs, yet, if it be patient, it, too, is according to the will of God. For God hath made us such as to suffer. He willeth that suffering be the healthful chastisement of our sins. 3. Then, whatever thy grief or trouble be, take every drop in thy cup from the hand of Almighty God. Thou knowest well that all comes from God, ordered or overruled by Him. How was the cup of thy Lord filled, which He drank for thee? 4. Again, no trouble is too small, wherein to see the will of God for thee. Great troubles come but seldom. Daily fretting trials, that is, what of thyself would fret thee, may often, in God's hands, conform thee more to His gracious will. They are the daily touches, whereby He traces on thee the likeness of His Divine will. There is nothing too slight wherein to practise oneness with the will of God. Love or hate are the strength of will; love, of the will of God; hate, of the will of devils. A weak love is a weak will; a strong love is a strong will. Self-will is the antagonist of the will of God; for thou wert formed for God. If thou wert made for thyself, be self thy centre; if for God, repose thyself in the will of God. So shalt thou lose thy self-will, to find thy better will in God, and thy self-love shall be absorbed in the love of God. Yea, thou shalt love thyself, because God hath loved thee; take care for thyself, because thou art not thine own, but God careth for thee; will thine own good, because and as God willeth it. "Father, nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou." So hath our Lord sanctified all the natural shrinkings of our lower will. He vouchsafed to allow the natural will of His sacred Manhood to be "amazed and very heavy" at the mysterious sufferings of the cross, to hallow the "mute shrinking" of ours, and guide us on to His all-holy submission of His will. (*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*) *Christ's preparation for death*:—1. The prayer of Christ. In a praying posture He will be found when the enemy comes; He will be taken upon His knees. He was pleading hard with God in prayer, for strength to carry Him through this heavy trial, when they came to take Him. And this prayer was a very remarkable prayer, both for the solitariness of it, "He withdrew about a stone's cast" (verse 41) from His dearest intimates—no ear but His Father's shall hear what He had now to say—and for the vehemency and importunity of it; these were those strong cries that He poured out to God in the days of His flesh (Heb. v. 7). And for the humility expressed in it: He fell upon the ground, He rolled Himself as it were in dust, at His Father's feet. 2. This Scripture gives you also an account of the agony of Christ, as well as of His prayer, and that a most strange one; such as in all respects never was known before in nature. 3. You have here His relief in this His agony, and that by an angel dispatched post from heaven to comfort Him. The Lord of angels now needed the comfort of an angel. It was time to have a little refreshment, when His face and body too stood as full of drops of blood as the drops of dew are upon the grass. 1. Did Christ pour out His soul to God so ardently in the garden, when the hour of His trouble was at hand? Hence we infer that prayer is a singular preparative for, and relief under, the greatest troubles. 2. Did Christ withdraw from the disciples to seek God by prayer? Thence it follows that the company of the best men is not always seasonable. The society of men is beautiful in its season, and no better than a burden out of season. I have read of a good man, that when his stated time for closet-prayer was come, he would say to the company that were with him, whatever they were, "Friends, I must beg your excuse for a while, there is a Friend waits to speak with me." The company of a good man is good, but it ceases to be so, when it hinders the enjoyment of better company. One hour with God is to be preferred to a thousand days' enjoyment of the best men on earth. 3. Did Christ go to God thrice upon the same account? Thence learn that Christians should not be discouraged, though they have sought God once and again, and no answer of Peace comes. If God deny you in the things you ask, He deals no otherwise with you than He did with Christ. 4. Was Christ so earnest in prayer that He prayed Himself

into a very agony? Let the people of God blush to think how unlike their spirits are to Christ, as to their prayer-frames. Oh, what lively, sensible, quick, deep, and tender apprehensions and sense of those things about which He prayed, had Christ! Though He saw His very blood starting out from His hands, and His clothes dyed in it, yet being in an agony, He prayed the more earnestly. I do not say Christ is imitable in this; no, but His fervour in prayer is a pattern for us, and serves severely to rebuke the laziness, dulness, torpor, formality, and stupidity that is in our prayers. Oh, how unlike Christ are we! His prayers were pleading prayers, full of mighty arguments and fervent affections. Oh, that His people were in this more like Him! 5. Was Christ in such an agony before any hand of man was upon Him merely from the apprehensions of the wrath of God with which He now contested? Then surely it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, for our God is a consuming fire. 6. Did Christ meet death with such a heavy heart? Let the hearts of Christians be the lighter for this when they come to die. The bitterness of death was all squeezed into Christ's cup. He was made to drink up the very dregs of it, that so our death might be the sweeter to us. (*J. Flavel.*)

The agony in Gethsemane.—I. Meditating upon the agonizing scene in Gethsemane we are compelled to observe that our Saviour there endured a grief unknown to any previous period of His life, and therefore we will commence our discourse by raising the question, **WHAT WAS THE CAUSE OF THE PECULIAR GRIEF OF GETHSEMANE?** Do you suppose it was the fear of coming scorn or the dread of crucifixion? was it terror at the thought of death? Is not such a supposition impossible? It does not make even such poor cowards as we are sweat great drops of blood, why then should it work such terror in Him? Read the stories of the martyrs, and you will frequently find them exultant in the near approach of the most cruel sufferings. The joy of the Lord has given such strength to them, that no coward thought has alarmed them for a single moment, but they have gone to the stake, or to the block, with psalms of victory upon their lips. Our Master must not be thought of as inferior to His boldest servants, it cannot be that He should tremble where they were brave. I cannot conceive that the pangs of Gethsemane were occasioned by any extraordinary attack from Satan. It is possible that Satan was there, and that his presence may have darkened the shade, but he was not the most prominent cause of that hour of darkness. Thus much is quite clear, that our Lord at the commencement of His ministry engaged in a very severe duel with the prince of darkness, and yet we do not read concerning that temptation in the wilderness a single syllable as to His soul's being exceeding sorrowful, neither do we find that He "was sore amazed and was very heavy," nor is there a solitary hint at anything approaching to bloody sweat. When the Lord of angels condescended to stand foot to foot with the prince of the power of the air, he had no such dread of him as to utter strong cries and tears and fall prostrate on the ground with threefold appeals to the Great Father. What is it then, think you, that so peculiarly marks off Gethsemane and the griefs thereof? We believe that now the Father put Him to grief for us. It was now that our Lord had to take a certain cup from the Father's hand. This removes all doubt as to what it was, for we read, "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him, He hath put Him to grief: when thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin." "The Lord hath made to meet on Him the iniquity of us all." Yet would I exhort you to consider these griefs awhile, that you may love the Sufferer. He now realized, perhaps for the first time, what it was to be a sin bearer. It was the shadow of the coming tempest, it was the prelude of the dread desertion which He had to endure, when He stood where we ought to have stood, and paid to His Father's justice the debt which was due from us; it was this which laid Him low. To be treated as a sinner, to be smitten as a sinner, though in Him was no sin—this it was which caused Him the agony of which our text speaks. II. Having thus spoken of the cause of His peculiar grief, I think we shall be able to support our view of the matter, while we lead you to consider, **WHAT WAS THE CHARACTER OF THE GRIEF ITSELF?** Trouble of spirit is worse than pain of body; pain may bring trouble and be the incidental cause of sorrow, but if the mind is perfectly untroubled, how well a man can bear pain, and when the soul is exhilarated and lifted up with inward joy, pain of body is almost forgotten, the soul conquering the body. On the other hand the soul's sorrow will create bodily pain, the lower nature sympathizing with the higher. III. Our third question shall be, **WHAT WAS OUR LORD'S SOLACE IN ALL THIS?** He resorted to prayer, and especially to prayer to God under the character of Father. In conclusion: Learn—1. The real humanity of our Lord. 2. The matchless love

of Jesus. 3. The excellence and completeness of the atonement. 4. Last of all, what must be the terror of the punishment which will fall upon those men who reject the atoning blood, and who will have to stand before God in their own proper persons to suffer for their sins. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Gethsemane*.—I. Come hither and behold THE SAVIOUR'S UNUTTERABLE WOE. We cannot do more than look at the revealed causes of grief. 1. It partly arose from the horror of His soul when fully comprehending the meaning of sin. 2. Another deep fountain of grief was found in the fact that Christ now assumed more fully His official position with regard to sin. 3. We believe that at this time, our Lord had a very clear view of all the shame and suffering of His crucifixion. 4. But possibly a yet more fruitful tree of bitterness was this—that now His Father began to withdraw His presence from Him. 5. But in our judgment the fiercest heat of the Saviour's suffering in the garden lay in the temptations of Satan. "This is your hour and the power of darkness." "The prince of this world cometh." II. Turn we next to contemplate THE TEMPTATION OF OUR LORD. 1. A temptation to leave the work unfinished. 2. Scripture implies that our Lord was assailed by the fear that His strength would not be sufficient. He was heard in that He feared. How, then, was He heard? An angel was sent unto Him strengthening Him. His fear, then, was probably produced by a sense of weakness. 3. Possibly, also, the temptation may have arisen from a suggestion that He was utterly forsaken. I do not know—there may be sterner trials than this, but surely this is one of the worst, to be utterly forsaken. 4. We think Satan also assaulted our Lord with a bitter taunt indeed. You know in what guise the tempter can dress it, and how bitterly sarcastic he can make the insinuation—"Ah! Thou wilt not be able to achieve the redemption of Thy people. Thy grand benevolence will prove a mockery, and Thy beloved ones will perish." III. Behold, THE BLOODY SWEAT. This proves how tremendous must have been the weight of sin when it was able so to crush the Saviour that He distilled drops of blood! This proves, too, my brethren, the mighty power of His love. It is a very pretty observation of old Isaac Ambrose that the gum which exudes from the tree without cutting is always the best. This precious camphire-tree yielded most sweet spices when it was wounded under the knotty whips, and when it was pierced by the nails on the cross; but see, it giveth forth its best spice when there is no whip, no nail, no wound. This sets forth the voluntariness of Christ's sufferings, since without a lance the blood flowed freely. No need to put on the leech, or apply the knife; it flows spontaneously. IV. THE SAVIOUR'S PRAYER. 1. Lonely prayer. 2. Humble prayer. 3. Filial prayer. 4. Persevering prayer. 5. Earnest prayer. 6. The prayer of resignation. V. THE SAVIOUR'S PREVALENCE. His prayers did speed, and therefore He is a good Intercessor for us. "How was He heard?" 1. His mind was suddenly rendered calm. 2. God strengthened Him through an angel. 3. God heard Him in granting Him now, not simply strength, but a real victory over Satan. I do not know whether what Adam Clarke supposes is correct, that in the garden Christ did pay more of the price than He did even on the cross; but I am quite convinced that they are very foolish who get to such refinement that they think the atonement was made on the cross, and nowhere else at all. We believe that it was made in the garden as well as on the cross; and it strikes me that in the garden one part of Christ's work was finished, wholly finished, and that was His conflict with Satan. I conceive that Christ had now rather to bear the absence of His Father's presence and the revilings of the people and the sons of men, than the temptations of the devil. I do think that these were over when He rose from His knees in prayer, when He lifted Himself from the ground where He marked His visage in the clay in drops of blood. (*Ibid.*) *The agony of Christ*.—I. THE PERSON OF THE ILLUSTRIOUS SUFFERER. 1. The dignified essential Son of God. 2. Truly and properly the Son of Man. Had our nature, body, soul. II. THE AGONY WHICH HE ENDURED. 1. The agony itself. (1) Deep, intense mental suffering. (2) Overwhelming amazement and terror. 2. The cause of Christ's agony. It arose—(1) From the pressure of a world's guilt upon Him. (2) From the attacks of the powers of darkness. (3) From the hiding of the Divine countenance. 3. The effects of the agony. He fell to the ground, overwhelmed, prostrated, and sweat as it were, great drops of blood. III. THE PRAYER WHICH HE OFFERED. "He prayed more earnestly." Observe—1. The matter of His prayer. It was for the removal of the cup (verse 42). As man, He had a natural aversion to pain and suffering. 2. The spirit of His prayer was that of holy submission, devout resignation. 3. The manner of His prayer. 4. The intensity of His prayer. The success of His prayer. Application: 1. Learn the amazing evil of sin. 2. The

expensiveness of our redemption. 3. The sympathy of Christ (Heb. iv. 15). 4. The necessity of resignation to the will of God. (*J. Burns, D.D.*) *The Saviour's bloody sweat*.—I. THE CAUSES OF THE BLOODY SWEAT. 1. A vehement inward struggle. (1) On the one hand He was seized by fear and horror of His passion and death. (2) On the other hand He was burning with zeal for the honour of God and redemption of men. (3) How great will be the anguish of the sinner at the sight of everlasting death and the endless pains of hell! 2. The representation of all the sins of the past, present, and future. 3. The consideration that His passion would prove useless to so many. II. THE MANNER OF HIS SWEATING BLOOD. 1. He sweat blood in the strict sense of the word. (1) Natural blood. (2) In a natural way. 2. He was full of sorrow. 3. He fell upon His face. (*J. Marchant.*) *The witness to the power of prayer*.—I. AN ACT OF REAL PRAYER IS GREAT, POWERFUL, AND BEAUTIFUL; a spirit in an energy of pure, subdued, but confident desire, rising up and embracing, and securing the aid of the mighty Spirit of God. If we can believe the power of prayer, we may put forth the force of the soul and perform that act. How then can we learn that power? My answer is, From Christ. Everywhere Christ is the Representative Man. This in two senses. 1. He is human nature in sum and completeness as it ought to be. To see humanity as God imaged and loved it, to see humanity at its best, we must see our Master. 2. And Christ represents to us perfect human conduct. To see how to act in critical situations we must study Christ. In critical situations? Yes! there is the difficulty, there also the evidenced nobleness of a lofty human character. I need hardly say (for you know who Christ was) the most critical moments in human history were the moments of the Passion. Oh, perfect example! Oh, severe and fearful trial! Christ knelt alone amidst the olives, in the quiet garden, in the lonely night, and near, His weary, sleepy followers. It is a simple scene, but Christ's spirit was in action. What was the significance of the act? It was very awful. It was an "agony," a life-struggle, a contest. Much was involved in that moment of apparent quietude, of real struggle; but one lesson at any rate is important. Examine it. Here we have a witness to the power of prayer. II. THE AGONY WAS LITERALLY A CONTEST. What was the nature of the struggle? It was a contest with evil; of that we are certain, although the depth and details are wrapped in mystery. Anyhow the struggle was with a force of which, alas! we ourselves know something. No one can live to the age of five-and-twenty, and reflect with any degree of seriousness on himself or on the world around him, without knowing that evil is a fact. We find its cruel records in the blood-stained pages of history. We listen, and amidst whatever heavenly voices, still the wail of its victims is echoing age after age down the "corridors of time." Our own faults and follies will not efface themselves from the records of memory; in the brightness of the flaring day of life they may fade into dim and shadowy outline, but there are times of silence—on a sick-bed, in the still house at midnight, in the open desolation of the lonely sea—when they rise like living creatures, spectral threateners, or blaze their unrelenting facts in characters of fire. Their force was not realized in the moment of passion. But conscience hides its time, bears its stern, uncompromising witness when passion is asleep or dead. Sin is a matter of experience. It has withered life, in fact, in history, with the deathly chill and sadness of the grave. Somehow all feel it, but it is prominent and stern before the Christian. He can never forget, nor is it well he should, that we are in a world in which, when God appeared in human form, He was subjected to insult and violence by His creatures. That is enough. That is, without controversy, the measure of the power, the intensity of evil. If there is to be a contest with evil, it is clearly a contest with a serious enemy. III. HOW CAN WE THROW BACK SO FIERCE A POWER? THE ANSWER BROADLY IS, RELIGION. Religion is a personal matter; it must hold a universal empire over the being of each of us; it must rouse natural forces only by being in possession of supernatural power. Brothers, to possess a religion which can conquer sin we must follow our Master in the severity of principle, of conviction, of unflinching struggle. The external scene of His trial was simple, but He fought, and therefore conquered. Certainly He fought with evil, "in an agony." IV. "FOUGHT WITH EVIL." "What do you mean?" you ask. Evil! Is evil a thing, an object, like the pyramids of Egypt, or the roaring ocean, or an advancing army? Evil is the act of choice of a created will. It is the rejection by the creature of the laws of life laid down, not as tyrannical rules, but as necessary truths, by the Creator. Evil takes three active forms, so says Scripture, so we have learned in the Catechism: the accumulated force of bad opinion, that is "the world"; or the uncertain revolt of our own corrupt desires,

that is "the flesh"; or a living being wholly surrendered to hatred of the Creator, that is "the devil." Think of the last. You realize the severity of the contest in remembering that you fight with a fiend. Satan is a person. In this is he like ourselves. Of man it is said "he has thoughts of himself." This is true of Satan; he can think of himself, he can purpose with relentless will, he can plan with unparalleled audacity. There are three specific marks of his character—1. He is inveterate in his hatred of truth. He is a liar. 2. He is obstinate in his abhorrence of charity, pure intention, and self-sacrificing devotion. He is a murderer. 3. He shrinks from the open glory of goodness. He is a coward. To "abide in the truth," to "love good," and "love one another with a pure heart fervently," and to have holy fearlessness in the power of God is to be in direct opposition to him. From this it is evident that our contest is with a tremendous enemy, and that against us he need never be victorious. My brothers, there are two shadows projected over human life from two associated and mysterious facts—from sin, from death. In that critical moment when the human will is subjected to the force of temptation and yields to its sway, in that solemn moment when the human spirit is wrenched away for a time from its physical organism, there is a special power dangerously, not irresistibly, exercised by the being who is devoted to evil. A hint of this is given in Scripture in the allusion to the spirit "that now worketh in the children of disobedience," a hint of this dark realm certainly in the prayer by the grave-side that we may not "for any pains of death fall" from God. There is a shadow-land. How may we contemplate it without hopeless shuddering, how think of entering it without despairing fear? Now here is a palmary fact. Christ our strength as well as our example boldly entered, and in the depths of its deepest blackness conquered the fiend. "He was made sin"; "He became obedient unto death"; and for all who will to follow Him, His love, His devotion is victorious. "We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." Yes! In union with Christ we can do what He did. O blessed and brave One! We may follow His example and employ His power. His power! How may we be possessed of it? In many ways. Certainly in this way. It is placed at the disposal of the soul that prays. This is in effect the answer of Christ's revelation to the question, Why should we pray? Two facts let us remember and act upon with earnestness. 1. The value of a formed habit of prayer. Crises are sure to come, and then we are equally sure to act on habitual impulse. Christ learned in His humanity and practised Himself in the effort of prayer, and when the struggle reached its climax, the holy habit had its fulfilment. "Being in an agony He prayed." And—2. It is in moments of contest that real prayer rises to its height and majesty. "When my heart is hot within me," says the Psalmist, "I will complain"; and of Christ it is written, "Being in an agony He prayed more earnestly." Prayer, too, as the Christian knows, is not always answered *now* in the way he imagines most desirable, but it is always answered. If the cup does not pass, at least there is an angel strengthening the human spirit to drain it bravely to the dregs. Subjectively, there is comfort; objectively, there is real help. What might have been a tragedy becomes by prayer a blessing; desire which if misdirected might have crushed and overwhelmed us, becomes when truly used with the Holy Spirit's assistance a raw material of sanctity. Certainly from prayer we gain three things: a powerful stimulus, and strength for act or suffering; a deep and real consolation; and the soothing and ennobling sense of duty done. (*Canon Knox Little.*) *Our Lord's bloody sweat*:—There are some who only suppose that by this phraseology the mere size of the drops of perspiration is indicated. But the plain meaning of the language is that the sweat was bloody in its nature; that the physical nature of our Lord was so deranged by the violent pressure of mental agony that blood oozed from every pore. Such a result is not uncommon in a sensitive constitution. The face reddens with blood both from shame and anger. Were this continued with intensity, the blood would force its way through the smaller vessels, and exude from the skin. Kannigiesser remarks, "If the mind is seized with a sudden fear of death, the sweat, owing to the excessive degree of constriction, often becomes bloody." The eminent French historian, De Thou, mentions the case of an Italian officer who commanded at Monte-Mars, a fortress of Piedmont, during the warfare in 1552 between Henry II. of France and the Emperor Charles V. The officer, having been treacherously seized by order of the hostile general, and threatened with public execution unless he surrendered the place, was so agitated at the prospect of an ignominious death that he sweated blood from every part of his body. The same writer relates a similar occurrence in the person of a young Florentine at Rome,

unjustly put to death by order of Pope Sixtus V., in the beginning of his reign, and concludes the narrative as follows: "When the youth was led forth to execution, he excited the commiseration of many, and, through excess of grief, was observed to shed bloody tears, and to discharge blood instead of sweat from his whole body." Medical experience does so far corroborate the testimony of the Gospels, and shows that cutaneous hemorrhage is sometimes the result of intense mental agitation. The awful anguish of Him who said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," was sufficient cause to produce the bloody perspiration on a cold night and in the open air. (*J. Eadie, D.D.*) *The angel who strengthened Jesus*:—On a certain occasion, when the Rev. J. Robertson had been preaching one of a series of sermons, on "Angels in their revealed connection with the work of Christ," Dr. Duncan came into the vestry and said: "Will you be so kind as to let me know when you are going to take up the case of my favourite angel?" "But who is he, Doctor?" "Oh! guess that." "Well, it would not be difficult to enumerate all those whose names we have given us." "But I can't tell you his name, he is an anonymous angel. It is the one who came down to Gethsemane, and there strengthened my Lord to go through His agony for me, that He might go forward to the cross, and finish my redemption there. I have an extraordinary love for that one, and I often wonder what I'll say to him when I meet him first." This was a thought Dr. Duncan never wearied of repeating, in varied forms, whenever the subject of angels turned up in conversation. *Succoured by an angel*:—In the Ecclesiastical History of Socrates there is mention made of one Theodorus, a martyr put to extreme torments by Julian the Apostate, and dismissed again by him when he saw him unconquerable. Rufinus, in his History, says that he met with this martyr a long time after his trial, and asked him whether the pains he felt were not insufferable. He answered that at first it was somewhat grievous, but after awhile there seemed to stand by him a young man in white, who, with a soft and comfortable handkerchief, wiped off the sweat from his body (which, through extreme anguish, was little less than blood), and bade him be of good cheer, inasmuch that it was rather a punishment than a pleasure to him to be taken off the rack. When the tormentors had done, the angel was gone. *Angelic ministry*:—The only child of a poor woman one day fell into the fire by accident, and was so badly burned that he died after a few hours' suffering. The clergyman, as soon as he knew, went to see the mother, who was known to be dotingly fond of the child. To his great surprise, he found her calm, patient, and resigned. After a little conversation she told him how she had been weeping bitterly as she knelt beside her child's cot, when suddenly he exclaimed, "Mother, don't you see the beautiful man who is standing there and waiting for me?" Again and again the child persisted in saying that "the beautiful man" was waiting for him, and seemed ready, and even anxious, to go to him. And, as a natural consequence, the mother's heart was strangely cheered. (*W. Bazendale.*) *The safeguard against temptation*:—"Satan," says Bishop Hall, "always rocks the cradle when we sleep at our devotions. If we would prevail with God, we must wrestle first with our own dulness." And if this be needful, even in ordinary times, how much more so in the perilous days on which we are entering? Whatever we come short in, let it not be in watchfulness. None like to slumber who are expecting a friend or fearing a foe. Bunyan tells us "that when Hopeful came to a certain country, he began to be very dull and heavy of sleep. Wherefore he said, 'Let us lie down here, and take one nap.' 'By no means,' said the other, 'lest sleeping, we wake no more.' 'Why, my brother? Sleep is sweet to the labouring man; we may be refreshed, if we take a nap.' 'Do you not remember,' said the other, 'that one of the shepherds bid us beware of the Enchanted Ground?' He meant by that, that we should beware of sleeping." "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." Slumbering and back-sliding are closely allied. (*R. Macdonald, D.D.*)

Vers. 47-53. Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss.—*The traitor's kiss*:—I. A TRAITOR AMONG THE DISCIPLES. Many of them were weak in faith and carnal in apprehension, but only one a traitor. II. THE CHARACTERISTIC OF HIS TREASON. Betrayed Lord into cruel hands of foes. Professed followers of Christ may betray Him to the scorn of the world, giving the sceptic arguments for his infidelity, and the worldly excuses for rejection of Christ. III. THE MANNER OF THE BETRAYAL. A kiss. 1. It was the accepted token of affection. 2. It was here prostituted to the basest of uses. 3. It was received with lamblike meekness by Him who knew it meant treachery. IV. THEY BETRAY THE SON OF MAN WITH A

KISS WHO.—1. Compliment and deny Him with the same lips. 2. Profess to be united with Him at His table, and then act as lovers and servants of the world. 3. Exalt His humanity to the skies, and deny His rightful divinity and the efficacy of the atonement. (*Homiletic Review*.) *Christ betrayed by Judas*.—I. BY WHOM CHRIST WAS BETRAYED. "Judas, one of the twelve." Not an occasional disciple who had fastened himself upon the Lord's company, not one of the seventy who had been sent forth by two and two; one of the called, the chosen; one singled out from the great mass of mankind for the office of a foundation-stone in the Church of God. II. Let us consider SOME OF THE AGGRAVATIONS OF THIS PERFIDIOUS CONDUCT ON THE PART OF JUDAS. Judas was not only equal with the rest of the apostles, but he was allowed to carry the bag, which would certainly appear to invest him with a sort of official superiority. III. THE ENDS FOR WHICH CHRIST'S BETRAYAL WAS PERMITTED. That it was of mere permission we know. God has abundance of snares for taking the wise in their own craftiness; He has ten thousand accidents at command by which to mar a well-concerted plot. Yea, even after the capture had been effected, twelve legions of angels waited the bidding of Christ to rescue Him from the traitor's power. But God will not avail Himself of these means. IV. Let us now consider some of the MORAL LESSONS which seem to be conveyed to us by this history. 1. We see how needful it is that we, each one of us, look well to the state of our own hearts. Here is a man who knew the truth, who had preached the truth, who had wrought miracles for the sake of the truth; and yet became a castaway. Now, why was this? He "held the truth in unrighteousness." The man who has been a hypocrite in religion is very rarely recovered; he deceives others, but yet more fatally does he deceive himself. 2. Again: the history teaches us how little security against our falling away, there is in the possession of eminent spiritual advantages. "Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve." 3. Again: we learn from this history how insensible and unperceived is the progress of the downward course in sin. When a man once enters on the way of transgression, he can never tell where he shall stop. Neither wickedness nor holiness attain to their full stature all at once. We cannot suppose that Judas had the remotest thought of his treachery when he first accepted the invitation to become one of the apostles. 4. The enslaving power of the love of this present world. (*D. Moore, M.A.*) *The treason of Judas*.—1. Hence in the first place we learn, that the greatest professors had need be jealous of their own hearts, and look well to the grounds and principles of their professions. 2. Learn hence also, that eminent knowledge and profession puts a special and eminent aggravation upon sin. To sin against clear light is to sin with a high hand. It is that which makes a sad waste of the conscience. 3. Learn hence, in the third place, that unprincipled professors will sooner or later become shameful apostates. 4. Moreover in this example of Judas you may read this truth—that men and women are never in more imminent danger than when they meet with temptations exactly suited to their master-lusts, to their own iniquity. O pray, pray, that ye may be kept from a violent suitable temptation. Satan knows that when a man is tried here, he falls by the root. 5. Hence, in like manner, we are instructed, that no man knows where he shall stop when he first engages himself in a way of sin. 6. Did Judas sell Christ for money? What a potent conqueror is the love of this world! How many hath it cast down wounded? What great professors have been dragged at its chariot-wheels as its captives? Pliny tells us that the mermaids delight to be in green meadows, into which they draw men by their enchanting voices; but saith he, there always lie heaps of dead men's bones by them. A lively emblem of a bewitching world! Good had it been for many professors of religion if they had never known what the riches, and honours, and pleasures of this world meant. 7. Did Judas fancy so much happiness in a little money, that he would sell Christ to get it? Learn, then, that which men promise themselves much pleasure and contentment in, in the way of sin, may prove the greatest curse and misery to them that ever befel them in the world. 8. Was there one, and but one, of the twelve that proved a Judas, a traitor to Christ? Learn thence, that it is a most unreasonable thing to be prejudiced at religion, and the sincere professors of it, because some that profess it prove naught and vile. 9. Did Judas, one of the twelve, do so? Learn thence, that a drop of grace is better than a sea of gifts. Gifts have some excellency in them, but the way of grace is the more excellent way (1 Cor. xii. 31). Gifts, as one saith, are dead graces, but graces are living gifts. There is many a learned head in hell. These are not the things that accompany salvation. It is better for thee to feel one Divine impression from God upon thy heart than to

have ten thousand fine notions floating in thy head. Judas was a man of parts, but what good did they do him? 10. Did the devil win the consent of Judas to such a design as this? Could he get no other but the hand of an apostle to assist him? Learn hence, that the policy of Satan lies much in the choice of his instruments he works by. No bird, saith one, like a living bird to tempt others into the net. Austin told an ingenious young scholar the devil coveted him for an ornament. He knows he hath a foul cause to manage, and therefore will get the fairest hand he can to manage it with the less suspicion. 11. Did Judas, one of the twelve, do this? Then, certainly, Christians may approve and join with such men on earth whose faces they shall never see in heaven. 12. Did Judas, one of the twelve, a man so obliged, raised, and honoured by Christ, do this? Cease then from man, be not too confident, but beware of men. "Trust ye not in a friend, put no confidence in a guide, keep the door of thy lips from her that lieth in thy bosom" (Mic. vii. 5). (*J. Flavel.*) *The betrayal*.—I. LET US TARRY AWHILE, AND SEE OUR LORD UNGRATEFULLY AND DASTARDLY BETRAYED. 1. It is appointed that He must die, but how shall He fall into the hands of His adversaries? Shall they capture Him in conflict? It must not be, lest He appear an unwilling victim. Shall He flee before His foes until He can hide no longer? It is not meet that a sacrifice should be hunted to death. Shall He offer Himself to the foe? That were to excuse His murderers, or be a party to their crime. Shall He be taken accidentally or unawares? That would withdraw from His cup the necessary bitterness which made it wormwood mingled with gall. (1) One reason for the appointment of the betrayal lay in the fact that it was ordained that man's sin should reach its culminating point in His death. (2) Beyond a doubt, however, the main reason for this was that Christ might offer a perfect atonement for sin. We may usually read the sin in the punishment. Man betrayed His God. Therefore must Jesus find man a traitor to Him. There must be the counterpart of the sin in the suffering which He endured. You and I have often betrayed Christ. It seemed most fitting, then, that He who bore the chastisement of sin should be reminded of its ingratitude and treachery by the things which He suffered. (3) Besides, brethren, that cup must be bitter to the last degree which is to be the equivalent for the wrath of God. (4) Moreover, we feel persuaded that by thus suffering at the hand of a traitor the Lord became a faithful High Priest, able to sympathize with us when we fall under the like affliction. 2. Now let us look at the treason itself. You perceive how black it was. (1) Judas was Christ's servant, what if I call him His confidential servant. (2) Judas was more than this: he was a friend, a trusted friend. (3) The world looked upon Judas as a colleague of our Lord's. (4) Our Lord would look upon Judas as a representative man, the portraiture of many thousands who in after ages have imitated his crime. 3. Observe the manner in which Christ met this affliction. (1) His calmness. (2) His gentleness. II. Grant me your attention while we make an estimate of the man by whom the Son of Man was betrayed—JUDAS THE BETRAYER. 1. I would call your attention, dear friends, to his position and public character. (1) Judas was a preacher; nay, he was a foremost preacher, "he obtained part of this ministry," said the Apostle Peter. (2) Judas took a very high degree officially. He had the distinguished honour of being entrusted with the Master's financial concerns, and this, after all, was no small degree to which to attain. The Lord, who knows how to use all sorts of gifts, perceived what gift the man had. (3) You will observe that the character of Judas was openly an admirable one. I find not that he committed himself in any way. Not the slightest speck defiled his moral character so far as others could perceive. He was no boaster, like Peter. 2. But I call your attention to his real nature and sin. Judas was a man with a conscience. He could not afford to do without it. He was no Sadducee who could fling religion overboard; he had strong religious tendencies. But then it was a conscience that did not sit regularly on the throne; it reigned by fits and starts. Conscience was not the leading element. Avarice predominated over conscience. 3. The warning which Judas received, and the way in which he persevered. 4. The act itself. He sought out his own temptation. He did not wait for the devil to come to him; he went after the devil. He went to the chief priests and said, "What will ye give me?" Alas! some people's religion is grounded on that one question. 4. We conclude with the repentance of Judas. He did repent; but it was the repentance that worketh death. The man who repents of consequences does not repent. The ruffian repents of the gallows but not of the murder, and that is no repentance at all. Human law, of course, must measure sin by consequences, but

God's law does not. There is a pointsman on a railway who neglects his duty; there is a collision on the line, and people are killed; well, it is manslaughter to this man through his carelessness. But that pointsman, perhaps, many times before had neglected his duty, but no accident came of it, and then he walked home and said, "Well, I have done no wrong." Now the wrong, mark you, is never to be measured by the accident, but by the thing itself, and if you have committed an offence and you have escaped undetected it is just as vile in God's eye; if you have done wrong and Providence has prevented the natural result of the wrong, the honour of that is with God, but you are as guilty as if your sin had been carried out to its fullest consequences, and the whole world set ablaze. Never measure sin by consequences, but repent of them as they are in themselves. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Treachery to Christ*:—I. Observe, THE PERSON ADDRESSED—Judas. One on whom the Saviour had conferred many benefits, and who had made an open profession of His name. Betrayest thou! II. Observe, the PERSON SPEAKING—Jesus. The title which Jesus here assumes, in calling Himself the Son of Man, may teach us the following things—1. That He is really and properly Man, as well as truly Divine. 2. The phrase, Son of Man, seems intended to denote the meanness of Christ's origin, and the poverty of His outward condition. 3. Christ's assumption of this character may teach us to consider Him as the Saviour of all nations; or of all that ever will be saved, out of every kindred, tongue, and people. He is not the Son of this or that particular people, but the Son of Man, and the Saviour of all them that believe, by whatever name they may be distinguished. 4. The term Son of Man seems to have been pre-figured and foretold as a title which belonged to the expected Messiah. III. THE QUESTION WHICH JESUS PUTS TO THE TRAITOR: "Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" Improvement: 1. We have here a loud call to be jealous of our own hearts, and to exercise a holy watchfulness over them. More especially, if we regard our immortal interests, let us carefully avoid the following things—(1) Self-confidence. The fear of falling is a good security against it. (2) The secret indulgence of any sin: this was the ruin of Judas. (3) Beware of a profession without principle, the form of godliness without the power. Those who have no root in themselves will soon wither away. 2. We see how far a person may go in the way to heaven, and yet fall short of it. 3. Let us admire and adore the infinite wisdom of God, who brought so much real good out of so much aggravated evil. (B. Beddome, M.A.) He touched his ear, and healed him.—*Jesus the Restorer*:—

Jesus wrought a miracle to repair the mischief which Peter had done. Thus, by one act, in one moment, Christ made Himself the repairer of the breach. The evil, which His follower had done, was cancelled; and, through the kind interposition of a special act, the injured man was none the worse—but rather the better—and the harm, of which a Christian had been the occasion, was neutralized by his Master. I do not know what we should any of us do if we might not hope that this is still one of the blessed offices of Christ. We go through life meaning to do good; but oh! how often—through some ignorance, or indiscretion, or self-will—doing exactly the reverse! Happy is it for us if we might believe that Christ comes after us to undo the harm—nay, that by one of His gracious transformations, He comes afterwards to turn to benefit the very thing which we have done hurtfully. In the retrospect of life there was, it may be, a long period before you knew God—when your influence was all on the wrong side; your example and your words were always for the world, and sometimes for what was positively sinful! How many a bad and well-nigh deadly "wound" must you have been making during those years upon the minds of those among whom your remarks and your actions were being flung about with such utter carelessness! How many a young companion, years back, may have learnt then to carry with him a life-long scar through some idle word of yours. Through the infinite patience, and the abounding grace of our God and Saviour, you have become a Christian; and you now love the Lord Jesus Christ as you love nothing else in earth or heaven; and, at this moment, you could not have a bitterer thought than to think that you had ever done anything to keep a soul from Jesus; or to give a moment's pain to one of His little ones. Now, may you take it as one of the wonderful provisions of your new state—as one of the blessings into which you have been admitted—that the Christ, whom you now call yours, will prevent the consequences of what you did in those days of sinful blindness—that He will restore what you destroyed, that fine bloom to that delicate conscience, it may be, of one of your early friends; that He will rectify the ill—that He will "touch" with His own virtue the afflicted part,

and that He will "heal" all that "wound." Why may we not believe all this? Was not that the spirit of the Man, that night, when He stood upon the Mount of Olives? And is He not the same Restorer now? Do not think because man made your trouble, therefore God will not deal with the trouble. It rests with you. If you bring a sin to Christ believingly, He will take away that sin. If you bring a sorrow to Christ believingly, He will take away that sorrow. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*)

Vers. 55-62. *Peter followed afar off.—Decision of character enforced:—*I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN FOLLOWING THE LORD AFAR OFF. Not giving the whole heart's affection to Him. II. WHAT USUALLY INDUCES ANY PERSONS TO DO SO. 1. The fear of man. 2. The love of the world. III. WHY WE SHOULD DETERMINE TO FOLLOW HIM FULLY. 1. It is dishonourable to God to follow Him afar off. 2. It is ruinous to our peace to be undecided in religion. 3. To follow the Lord afar off is injurious to the general interests of religion. Allow me, in closing, to inquire—1. Do you follow the Lord at all? 2. If you are following the Lord, how are you following Him? Is your heart in your professed subjection to Jesus Christ? What motive influences your conduct? (*W. Mudge.*) *Peter:—*I. THE MAN. A man of great natural audacity and force; coarse, homely, rugged, stout, tenacious, powerful, of that class of men, not large, who break down old walls, and bring in new ages. And yet a man of variable impulses, and of changeful moods. Under strong excitement, he stood firm as a granite rock. Hence his surname, "Peter." But the quick heat might be quickly chilled. And then the granite crumbled. The rock became a sand-heap. His judgment could not always be trusted. His greatest strength was sometimes his greatest weakness. His large, warm heart overmastered him. It was hard for him to be parted from his friends. It was hard for him to go against the wishes and opinions of his associates. Even those with whom he might be casually in contact, had undue power over him; not from lack of positive convictions of his own, but because his great, hungry heart craved sympathy and fellowship. He wanted men to think well of him, and feel kindly towards him. An over-weening love of approbation was his one great weakness. And so he lay, as such men always do, very much at the mercy of his companions and his circumstances. II. THE SIN OF PETER. There was really no excuse for it. He was in no personal danger. All he had to fear was a momentary contempt from servants and soldiers. Yet the paltry desire of standing well in the estimation of those who happened to be about him, menials as they were, caused him to prove false to his Lord. Miserable man! It makes us blush to think of him; so brave in meeting swords and clubs, so cowardly in meeting sneers. III. HIS REPENTANCE. The reproving look of Christ, standing meek among His buffeters, and soon to start for Cavalry, was too much for the false and recreant disciple. "He wept bitterly," they tell us; and we may well believe it, for he was at heart a good, true, brave man, and when he came to himself he despised and abhorred himself for the momentary weakness which had allowed him so basely to deny his Lord. . . . And so his character stands before us in proportions that do not appal and mock us as something quite miraculous and above our reach. While we stand in awe of him as an apostle, we are able to embrace him as a man, and walk on after him towards heaven. Nay, our interest in him is altogether peculiar. Majestic in his original endowments, we admire him. Inexcusable in his fall, we pity him. Elastic and fearless in his subsequent career, we accept it as a full and glorious atonement for every slip and every error of his life. If he was cowardly in the courtyard of Caiaphas, he made up for it by being a hero at his crucifixion, when he asked his tormentors to nail him to the cross with his feet turned upwards into heaven. IV. THE PRACTICAL BEARING OF OUR SUBJECT is direct and obvious. It might not be quite right theologically, to thank God for Peter's sin. But since he did sin, we certainly ought to be very thankful for the record of it. Had Judas alone offended, afterwards perishing by his own hands, and sinking to his own place, Christians, once sinning, might well grow desperate. Had Peter stood, as John did, unshaken and unsullied, our hard struggle with manifold infirmities would be far harder than it is. But now we have a sinning Peter before us; an apostle grievously sinning, but grandly recovered. And while we blush to look upon him, there is comfort in the sight. Be encouraged, my feeble, imperfect, wavering brother, not indeed to sin, nor yet to think lightly of sin; but if you have sinned, to go and sin no more. Remorse belongs to Judas. Penitence to Peter. Penitence, and a better life. (*R. D. Hitchcock, D.D.*) The Lord turned and looked upon Peter.—*Peter's sin and restoration:—*I. A GRIEVOUS

SIN. 1. Its elements. (1) Falsehood. (2) Cowardice. (3) Profanity. (4) Persistence. 2. Its aggravations. (1) His close connection with Christ. (2) His recent special privileges. (3) The repeated warnings given him. (4) His strong professions of devotion. (5) The urgent demands of the time and place. 3. Its instigations. (1) The failure was surprisingly sudden; (2) of brief duration; (3) never repeated. 4. Its chief causes. (1) Self-confidence. (2) Blindness to near danger. (3) Neglect of precautions. (4) The fear of derision. II. A GRACIOUS RESTORATION. 1. How was it brought about? (1) By a predicted coincidence (ver. 60). (2) By the Saviour's penetrating glance (ver. 61). (3) By the action of memory. 2. What proof have we of its genuineness? (1) His contrite sorrow. (2.) His amended life. Learn: 1. The weakness of the strongest. 2. The sufficiency of Christ's grace. (*M. Braithwaite.*) *The repentance of St. Peter*.—First we learn the possibility of perfect repentance after grace has been forfeited; of a return to God from sin committed after special favours and gifts of love. Further, there was a wonderful mercy overruling St. Peter's fall, bringing out of it even greater good. It was made to teach him what otherwise he seemed unable to learn. He needed to learn distrust of self. And thou who despondest at some past fall, hast thou no similar lesson to learn of deeper humility, of closer dependence on God? Hast thou had no self-trust? Has thy strength always been in prayer and watching? And the key-note of his Epistles is—"Be clothed with humility." "Be sober, and watch unto prayer." May not this be thy case—that the foundations of thy life need to be laid lower, in a more perfect self-abasement; a deeper humility: a more entire leaning upon God, a more complete abandonment of all high thoughts, independence of will, self-glorying, vanity, spirit of contradiction, and such-like; that beginning afresh, these hindrances being removed, thou mayest hide thyself from thyself, hide thyself in a perpetual recollection of the Divine presence and support, as the only stay and safeguard of thy frail, ever-falling humanity? Moreover, St. Peter is not merely the assurance to us of the possibility of a perfect restoration after falling from God, he is also the model of all true penitents. The first main element of St. Peter's recovery was a spirit of self-accusation, a ready acknowledgment of sin and error. Here, then, is one essential element of true repentance—self-accusation at the feet of Jesus. And how needful a lesson to learn well. The saddest part of our sin is, that we are so slow to confess it. Sin ever gathers round it an array of self-defences. Subtleties and evasions, special pleadings, shrinkings from humiliation, lingerings of pride, all gather round the consciousness of sin, and rise up instantly to hinder the only remedy of guilt, the only hope of restoration. Again, from St. Peter we learn that faith is a main element of restoration, preserved to him through the intercession of his Lord—"I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Now faith is not the belief of any particular dogma, nor is it the same as a spirit of assurance, neither is it any peculiar feeling appropriating some special promise; but it is the bent, the aim of the whole soul. It is the prevailing direction of all the powers of man toward God; it is the apprehension of the inner man embracing, grasping the invisible; living in things which are unseen and eternal, and raising him out of the sphere of sight which lives in things that are temporal. Faith may lay hold of one particular promise at one time, of another at another. And thus he had learnt to regard sin in the light of another world—sin abstractedly in itself, as a loss of spiritual life, as a thing abhorrent to God, as an utter contrariety to all that his soul was aspiring after. To rise thus above all the worldly consequences of sin, all its mere temporal effects, to read one's sin in the light of God's countenance, to view it as we shall view it on our death-bed, stripped of all accidents, with its awful consequences, as we pass into eternity—this is the attribute of faith; and through the preservation of his faith, as our Lord assures us, St. Peter arose from his fall. Oh! how much need have we to pray, "Lord, increase our faith"; that we may see our sins in their true form and colour. The sense of sin depends on our view of sanctity. As we grow better, we see sin clearer. As we have more of God, we realize evil more vividly. The greatest saints are therefore the deepest penitents. The bright light of purity in which they live sets off more vividly the darkness of the spots which stain the field of their souls' life. The more they advance, the more truly they repent. As, *e.g.*, we see more the power of truth, the more we are ashamed of our deceptions. As we perceive love and largeness of heart, so we despise our selfishness. The more God shines into us, the more we loathe our own vileness. We judge by the contrast. There is one more feature of a true repentance which is exhibited

in St. Peter. His repentance turned upon his love of the person of Christ. This had been long the moving principle of his life. His indignation at the idea of his Master's suffering: his refusing to be washed before the administration of the blessed Sacrament; his taking the sword, and then striking with it; his entering the judgment-hall—were all impulses of a fervent, though unchastened, love—a love to our Lord's person. And this was the secret power of that look which our Lord, when He turned, cast upon him. It may seem as though St. Peter's love to our Lord were too human, too much that of a man toward his fellow. It did indeed need chastening, increased reverence, more of that deep, adoring awe which St. John earlier learnt; and which St. Peter learnt at last in the shame and humiliations of his fall. But love to our Lord must needs be human—human in its purest, highest form. The Incarnation of God has made an essential change in the relations between God and man, and so in the love that binds us. He took our nature, and abideth in that nature. He is Man eternal, as He is God eternal. He loves, and will evermore love us, in that nature, and through its sensations, and He draws us to love Him through the same nature, with the impulse of which humanity is capable. He loved with a human love, and He is to be loved in return with a human love. He consecrated the human affections to Himself in His human form as their proper end, so that through His humanity they might centre upon the eternal Godhead. Love is of the very essence of repentance, and love is ever associated with a person, and the true movement of the deepening and enduring love of penitents circles around the Person of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. In conclusion, I would briefly point out two habits of devotion necessary to be cherished, in order that the grace of such a repentance as we have been contemplating may be the more worked in us. One is the habit of meditation on the Person of Jesus Christ. Again, love can be cherished only by habitual intercourse, or ever-renewed inward feeding on the beloved object. If there be no converse, or communion of thought, love must decline and die. And how can an invisible person become the object of love, except by inward contemplation? But it is not in the nature of the human heart to love another, unless that other become a constant companion, or unless his beauty and amiableness become strongly impressed on the soul, and be borne always in remembrance. The grace of God moves and operates according to the laws of humanity. Grace is above nature, but it is according to nature. It acts on nature, and raises nature up to the level of God, but is human still. What, then, would stir the heart to love according to nature, the same will stir the heart to love above nature. And what is this but the contemplation of the object, followed by an habitual feeding upon it? The second point is this: we must learn to measure the guilt of our sins by the sorrows of God in the flesh. We have no proper rule of our own by which to measure the guilt or sin. Sin has ruined this lower creation of God. Sin brought the flood and the fire of Sodom, and it has in its train disease, and famine, and war. It has created death, and made death eternal. All these are as certain rules and proportions by which we can form some estimate of the guilt of sin. But they are partial and imperfect measures, after all. The only true and adequate measure is the blood of God Incarnate and the sorrows of His sacred heart. Learn, then, to look at sin in this connection—not sin in the aggregate, but individual sins. Measure by this price the special besetting sin of thy nature. Weigh it in the scale against the weight of the sacrifice which bowed to the cross the Incarnate God. (*Canon T. T. Carter*). *Peter's presumptuous sin and sorrowful repentance*:—I. CONFIDENCE AND PRESUMPTION ARE VERY UNPROMISING SIGNS OF STEADFASTNESS AND PERSEVERANCE IN RELIGION. Trust in God is one thing, and trust in ourselves is another; and there is reason to think that they will differ as much in the success that attends them as they do in the powers upon which they are founded. It is in vain for you to promise yourselves a superiority under trials and temptations, unless you lay the right foundation, by imploring the aid and assistance of God's Holy Spirit, whose province only it is to confirm the faithful to the end. II. From this example of St. Peter we may learn also WHAT LITTLE REASON THERE IS TO PROMISE OURSELVES SUCCESS AGAINST TEMPTATIONS WHICH ARE OF OUR OWN SEEKING. St. Peter had warning given him, and was told by One whose word he might have taken, that he was not able to undergo the trial, which he seemed so much to despise. But try he would, and learnt to know his own weakness in his miscarriage. God knows our strength better than we ourselves do; and therefore, when He has warned us to avoid the occasions of sin, and to fly from the presence of the enemy, it is presumption to think ourselves able to stand the attack, and our preparations to meet the danger

must be vain and ineffectual. When we strive not lawfully, even victory is dishonourable, and no success can justify disobedience to orders. III. From the example of St. Peter we may learn HOW GREAT THE ADVANTAGES OF REGULAR AND HABITUAL HOLINESS ARE. Good Christians, though they may fall like other men through passion, or presumption, or other infirmities, yet the way to their repentance is more open and easy; their minds, not being hardened by sin, are awakened by the gentlest calls, and the sense of virtue revives upon the first motion and suggestions of conscience. St. Peter fell, and his fall was very shameful; but his repentance was as surprising and remarkable as his fall. IV. You may observe that THE SINS OF THE BEST MEN ARE EXPIATED WITH THE GREATEST SENSE OF SORROW AND AFFLICTION. It is impossible to have a sense of religion, to think of God and ourselves as we ought to do, without being affected with the deepest sorrow for our offences. When men are truly concerned, they do not consider what they are to get by their tears, or what profit their sorrow will yield. The soul must vent its grief; and godly sorrow is as truly the natural expression of an inward pain as worldly sorrow, however they differ in their causes and objects. (*Bishop Sherlock.*)

Peter's sin, and Peter's repentance.—I. PETER'S SIN. 1. The sin itself. It was the denial of his Lord. He denied that he knew Jesus. He was ashamed to own his connection with Jesus. And he yielded to the impulse of his shame and base fear. 2. But, secondly, let us attend to the circumstances of Peter's sin. We cannot take the measure of it, or see it in a just light, till these are considered. The circumstances are of two sorts. (1) In the first place, there are the aggravating circumstances—(a) The first circumstance of an aggravating nature was the rank he held among the followers of Jesus. Peter was more than an ordinary disciple. He was one of the twelve. He was an apostle. Moreover, he was one of the three nearest to the Lord in intercourse and love. (b) The second circumstance of aggravation was, that Peter had been warned of his danger. (c) It was also an aggravating circumstance in the case, that Peter had made great professions. When we read the sad story of his threefold denial, we are disposed to exclaim, What can this mean? Is this the bold confessor who was the first to avow his faith in the Messiahship of Jesus? (d) Fourthly, Peter's sin took an aggravation from the circumstance that it was committed in the presence of Jesus. (e) Peter denied his Lord at a time of love. He had just received the Holy Communion. And now the Passion of the Saviour was begun. (2) The extenuating circumstances in Peter's case. It is no less important to mark these, than to consider, as has been done, such as were of an aggravating nature. (a) First, then, it was an extenuating circumstance that he was surprised into the commission of his sin. The denial of his Lord was not deliberate. (b) Secondly, an important circumstance of extenuation was, that the sin was contrary to the tenor of Peter's life. (c) It should not be overlooked, that it seems to have been Peter's love for Christ that exposed him to the temptation by which he was overcome. (d) Fourthly, Peter was comparatively ignorant. Some allowance must be made, in the case of our apostle, for the prejudices which affected the universal Jewish mind. We must not judge him as if he had understood, as we do, or as he himself did afterwards, by what means it was that the peculiar work of Jesus, as the Messiah, was to be accomplished. (e) It is fit we should remember that the hour and the power of darkness were come.

II. PETER'S REPENTANCE. 1. Its origin. (1) Christ's prayer was the procuring cause of it. (2) The instrumental cause. (a) Christ's look. (b) Christ's word. (3) The influence of the Spirit of God was the efficient cause. 2. The signs, tokens, and manifestation of Peter's repentance. (1) He went out. A change came over his feelings, and he could remain no longer in the society of the irreligious servants and officers. (2) He deeply mourned for his sin. (3) He sought the society of Christ's disciples. (4) His love to the Lord revived. 3. The acceptance of Peter's repentance. (1) A message sent through the holy women. (2) Christ's interview with him alone. (3) The more public interview in Galilee. 4. Peter's repentance thus graciously accepted, what were the issues of it? He was the boldest of the bold, from that time forward, in confessing Christ. There was less boasting than there had been before; but he never finched again. There were no more denials. (*A. Gray.*) *Peter's restoration*.—I. First, LET US LOOK AT THE LORD, WHO LOOKED UPON PETER. 1. I see in that look, first, that which makes me exclaim—What thoughtful love! Jesus is bound, He is accused, He has just been smitten on the face, but His thought is of wandering Peter. He looked to others, but He never looked to Himself. I see, then, in our Lord's looking upon Peter, a wondrously thoughtful love. 2. I exclaim next, what a boundless condescension!

He had acted most shamefully and cruelly, and yet the Master's eye sought him out in boundless pity! 3. But then, again, What tender wisdom do I see here! "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." He knew best what to do; He did not speak to him, but looked upon him. 4. As I think of that look again, I am compelled to cry out, "What Divine power is here! This look worked wonders. I sometimes preach with all my soul to Peter, and, alas! he likes my sermon and forgets it. I have known Peter read a good book full of most powerful pleading, and when he has read it through, he has shut it up and gone to sleep. I remember my Peter when he lost his wife, and one would have thought it would have touched him, and it did, with some natural feeling; yet he did not return to the Lord, whom he had forsaken, but continued in his backsliding. See, then, how our Lord can do with a look what we cannot do with a sermon, what the most powerful writer cannot do with hundreds of pages, and what affliction cannot do with even its heaviest stroke. II. LET US LOOK INTO THE LOOK WHICH THE LORD GAVE TO PETER. Help us again, most gracious Spirit! 1. That look was, first of all, a marvellous refreshment to Peter's memory. "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." He saw the Man whom he loved as he had never seen Him before. This was He who called him, when he was fishing, to become a fisher of men; this was He who bade him spread the net, and caused him to take an incredible quantity of fishes, inasmuch that the boat began to sink, and he cried out, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord"; this was He who had made him walk on the water, and at other times had rebuked the winds, and raised the dead. This was He with whom Peter had been upon the Mount of Transfiguration! 2. Next, that turning of the Master was a special reminder of His warning words. Jesus did not say it in words, but He did more than say it by His look. "Ah, Peter! did not I tell you it would be so?" 3. Surely it was, also, a moving appeal to Peter's heart. 4. What do you think that look chiefly said? My thought about it, as I turned it over, was this: When the Lord looked upon Peter, though He did refresh his memory, and make an appeal to his conscience, yet there was still more evidently a glorious manifestation of love. If I may be permitted humbly and reverently to read what was written on my Master's face, I think it was this—"And yet I love thee, Peter, I love thee still! Thou hast denied Me, but I look upon thee still as Mine. I cannot give thee up." 5. Again, this look penetrated Peter's inmost heart. It is not every look that we receive that goes very deep. 6. One fact may not escape our notice: our Lord's look at Peter was a revival of all Peter's looking unto Jesus. The Lord's look upon Peter took effect because Peter was looking to the Lord. Do you catch it? If the Lord had turned and looked on Peter, and Peter's back had been turned on the Lord, that look would not have reached Peter, nor affected him. The eyes met to produce the desired result. 7. This look was altogether between the Lord and Peter. Nobody knew that the Lord looked on Peter, except Peter and his Lord. That grace which saves a soul is not a noisy thing; neither is it visible to any but the receiver. III. Now I must go to my third point: LET US LOOK AT PETER AFTER THE LORD HAD LOOKED AT HIM. What is Peter doing? 1. When the Lord looked on Peter the first thing Peter did was to feel awakened. Peter's mind had been sleeping. 2. The next effect was, it took away all Peter's foolhardiness from him. Peter had made his way into the high priest's hall, but now he made his way out of it. 3. The look of Christ severed Peter from the crowd. He was no longer among the fellows around the fire. He had not another word to say to them; he quitted their company in haste. It is well for believers to feel that they are not of the world. Oh, that the arrows of the great Lord would this morning pierce some soul even as a huntsman wounds a stag! Oh, that the wounded soul, like Peter, would seek solitude! The stag seeks the thicket to bleed and die alone; but the Lord will come in secret to the wounded heart, and draw out the arrow. 4. That look of Christ also opened the sluices of Peter's heart; he went out, and wept bitterly. There was gall in the tears he wept, for they were the washings of his bitter sorrow. 5. Yet I want you to notice that that look of Christ gave him relief. It is a good thing to be able to weep. Those who cannot weep are the people that suffer most. A pent-up sorrow is a terrible sorrow. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *Condemned by a look.*—When Sapor, King of Persia, raised a violent persecution against the Christians, Usthezan, an old nobleman, a courtier, that had served in Sapor's government in his minority, being a Christian, was so terrified that he left off his profession. But he, sitting at the court-gate when Simon, an aged holy bishop, was leading to prison, and rising up to salute him, the good bishop frowned upon him, and turned away his face with indignation, as being loth to look upon a man

that had denied the faith: Usthezanus fell a weeping, went into his chamber, put off his courtly attire, and broke out into these words: "Ah, how shall I appear before the great God of heaven whom I have denied, when Simon, but a man, will not endure to look upon me; if he frown, how will God behold me when I come before his tribunal?" The thought of God's judgment-seat wrought so strongly upon him, that he recovered his spiritual strength, and died a glorious martyr. (Spencer.)

Peter's penitence.—Dr. Moody Stewart was once praising some preacher to Dr. Duncan, who said, "He's too unbroken for me; plenty of learning and talents, but too unbroken yet." You speak about being broken in business, do you know anything of being broken in heart? The man who has been broken himself will be tender to other broken men. There is a story told in the Early Church how, if the cock crowed when Peter was preaching and the echoes came into the Church, he could go no further. The sermon was cut short; but when he began again there would be an unction and tenderness in it which would satisfy the most broken sinner in the congregation. (J. Whyte.)

God connects His moral commands with natural objects.—Instead of giving His moral command as a mere abstract announcement addressed only to the ear, which would then be in danger of being forgotten, He linked His words with objects which appealed to the eye, and were fitted to call up, when the eye rested upon them, the moral ideas connected with them. Though driven out of Eden, God has pursued the same plan in educating and disciplining man out of the consequences of the fall, as He pursued in Eden to keep him from falling. He connected his whole moral history as closely as before with the objects around him. Everything with which he deals preaches to him. The thorns and thistles coming up in his cultivated fields remind him of the curse; and the difficulties and disabilities which he finds in earning his daily bread are proofs and punishments to him of his sin. As truly as God made the tree of life to be a sacrament, as it were, in the midst of Eden, to keep alive in Adam's heart perpetually the conditions of life; as truly as Jesus associated the moral lesson to Peter with the crowing of the cock, so truly does God still make nature one of the great powers by which dead consciences and sluggish memories are awakened. Our moral experiences and actions are thus as closely linked with the trees and flowers as they were in Paradise. In our progress through life we are continually impressing our own moral history upon the objects around us; and these objects possess the power of recalling it, and setting it before us in all its vividness, even after the lapse of many years. Our feelings and actions pass from ourselves and become a part of the constitution of nature, become subtle powers pervading the scenes in which we felt and performed them. They endow the inanimate earth itself with a kind of consciousness, a kind of moral testimony which may afterwards witness for or against us. We cannot live in any place, or go through any scene, without leaving traces of ourselves behind in it; without mixing up our own experiences with its features, taking its inanimate things into our confidence, unbosoming ourselves to them, colouring them with our own nature, and placing ourselves completely in their power. They keep a silent record of what we are and do in the associations connected with our thoughts and actions; and that record they unfold for us to read when at any time we come into contact with them. And hence the significance of God's own words, "He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people." There is a moral purpose, as I have said, in all this. It is not for the mere vivifying of our feelings of pleasure or pain that the objects of nature are endowed with this strange power of association. God meant it to perform a most important part in our moral training. He meant it to remind us of sins which we should otherwise have forgotten, and to awaken our consciences that would otherwise have slumbered. By associating our sinful thoughts and actions with outward objects, He designed that they should be brought and kept before us in all their reality in order to produce the proper impression upon us, instead of allowing them to sink into the vague, ghostly abstractions which past sins are apt to become in the mind. And not seldom has this silent power of witness-bearing, which lurks in the scenes and objects of nature, been felt by guilty men, bringing them to a sense of their guilt. (H. Macmillan, LL.D.)

The effect of an external agency, in order to quicken a dead conscience and rouse a torpid memory.—George MacDonald, in his story of "Robert Falconer," relates a well-authenticated incident of a notorious convict in one of our colonies having been led to reform his ways, through going one day into a church, where the matting along the aisle happened to be of the same pattern as that in the little English church where he worshipped with his mother when a

boy. That old familiar matting vividly recalled the memories of childhood, "the mysteries of the kingdom of innocence," which had long been hid and overpowered by the sins and sufferings of later years. An unfortunate outcast, sunk in misery and vice, wandering in the streets of a large city, meets suddenly a child carrying a bunch of some common wild flowers—hawthorn, cowslips, or violets. A chord is touched which has long slumbered in the outcast's bosom. The innocent past comes back; the little child sitting on the fond mother's knee; the long, happy wanderings in the summer woods and hawthorn-shaded lanes; the cottage home, with all its old-fashioned ways and dear delights; all this sweeps over her like a blissful dream at the sight or smell of these humble wild flowers. Overpowered by the recollections of the past, and the awful contrast between what she was and might have been and what she is now, she turns away and weeps bitterly, perhaps to see at that moment the tender, reproachful eye of Him whom she has long denied, fixed upon her, and to hear His words of pity, "Go in peace, and sin no more."

Two young men are spending their last evening together amid the rural scenes in which they have been bred. They are going up to the great city on the morrow to push their fortunes, and are talking over their plans. While they are conversing, one of those little Italian boys who penetrate to the remotest nooks with their hurdy-gurdies, comes up and plays several tunes, which attract their attention, and draw from them a few coins. The young men part. One prospers by industry and talent; the other gives himself up to dissipation, is sent adrift, and becomes a wreck. Worn out with debauchery, and in the last stage of disease, he sends for his former friend. They meet; and at that moment the sound of a hurdy-gurdy is heard in the street. It is the little Italian boy playing the same tunes which he played on that well-remembered evening when the friends bade farewell to the country. It wanted but this to fill up the cup of the dying man's shame and sorrow. All that he has hazarded for the pleasures of the city comes rushing upon his memory. He has lost his money, his health, his character, his peace of mind, and his hope of heaven; and he has gained in exchange sorrow, pain, privation, an insupportable weariness of life, and a dread of death. That sound of the Italian hurdy-gurdy comes to him like the crowing of the cock to Peter. It is the turning point of his life. It awakens within him "the late remorse of love"; and he dies in the peace of Divine pardon and acceptance. All these are not mere fancy pictures; they are true to life; they have often happened, and the number of them might be indefinitely increased. Such examples impress upon our minds the solemn truth that there is nothing really forgotten in this world. (*Ibid.*)

Lessons from the fall of St. Peter.—1. Mark and admire the honesty and impartiality of the sacred historians. All four state this blot on Peter's character; and their combined account presents it fully and with many dreadful aggravations. 2. Let the example of Christ, in this case, teach us to pity and to seek to restore the fallen. 3. Let us consider Peter's denial of his Lord as a warning to us all. We may soon become very guilty, and be exposed to shame in an unguarded moment; and there is hardly any sin we may not be guilty of, if left to ourselves. 4. Let us be on our guard against the particular causes that led more immediately to Peter's fall. (1) Self-confidence. (2) Indecision. (3) Fear of man. (4) False shame. (5) Bad company. 5. Let those who, like Peter, have fallen, imitate Peter in his repentance. (*Jas. Foote, M.A.*)

The repentance of Peter.—I. PETER'S REPENTANCE. 1. The repentance of Peter is ascribed, in the first instance, to a circumstance apparently unimportant. The crowing of a cock. How observant then ought we to be of all which surrounds or befalls us; and how anxious to obtain from it instruction in righteousness! 2. The text ascribes it also to the interposition of Christ. Without this, the warning voice of the cock would have been heard in vain. 3. But what followed the look which the compassionate Saviour directed towards His fallen apostle? It was a look of the mildest reproof and the tenderest pity, but the lightning's flash could not have done more. Piercing his heart, it produced there that serious reflection from which his contrition sprung. II. PETER'S SORROW. 1. His sorrow was of a softening nature. "He wept." It was not that horror of soul, which has its origin solely in fear, and leaves the heart as hard as it finds it. It was the sorrow which springs from love, and fill the breast with the tenderest emotions, while it disquiets and humbles it. 2. But the sorrow of Peter was acute, as well as softening. He not only wept, but he wept "bitterly." And bitterly does every sinner weep, who really bewails his transgressions. 3. The sorrow of Peter was, further, a secret sorrow; a grief which sought retirement. "He went out" when he wept. Not that he was now afraid to acknowledge Christ, or unwilling to condemn himself for the crime

which he had committed ; but like penitent Ephraim, " he was ashamed, yea, even confounded " ; and he sought where to give vent to his sorrow unseen, and to implore undisturbed that mercy which he so greatly needed. And every real penitent is often " sitting alone." Flying from scenes of vanity which he once loved, and from society which his folly once enlivened, he retires to his closet, and there, when he has shut his door, he communes with his heart, prays to his offended Father, and weeps. III. WHAT EFFECTS PETER'S REPENTANCE AFTERWARDS PRODUCED.

1. An increasing love for his Lord. 2. Greater zeal and boldness in the service of Christ. (*C. Bradley, M.A.*) *Peter's repentance*.—I. THE LOOK OF JESUS. We

cannot picture to ourselves the countenance he exhibited, or the point and pungency of the sentiment it conveyed ; but I observe it was doubtless the look of offended dignity ; it was the look of insulted friendship ; it was the look of betrayed confidence ; it was the look of keen and humiliating reproof, and such reproof the whole of Peter's conduct justly merited. I observe, further, that the look of Jesus was a look which conveyed conviction. And, once more, it was a look of compassion. What a conflict of feeling must have been produced by the emotions displayed on this deeply interesting occasion. Humbled by reproof, pursued by conviction, melted by love, what tongue can describe his grief, or what artist give a hue sufficiently deep to the manifestation of his contrition ! These are the feelings—a knowledge of which must be acquired in the most impressive and affecting school in the world. These are feelings—a knowledge of which must be acquired on Mount Calvary. The man who has been brought to look on Him whom he has pierced has an idea more clear, a conception more strong of the feelings of Peter than the art of eloquence, or the line of the pencil can convey. II. THE RECOLLECTIONS WHICH THE LOOK OF JESUS REVIVED.

1. The recollection of previous obligation. 2. The recollection of oft-repeated and solemn protestations of fidelity and affection. 3. The recollection of the scene at the Last Supper. III. THE EFFECTS PRODUCED. 1. The retirement he sought.

True repentance flies to solitude, and shrinks even from sympathy. 2. The depth of his sorrow. Concluding lessons : 1. Consolation to those who, like Peter, weep bitterly in secret. Special news of Christ's resurrection sent to Peter : " Seek him in his solitude, and tell him that the Lord waits with open arms to receive him."

2. But remember that the great moral of the whole is caution. Learn, therefore, by way of application in the first place, the necessity of guarding vigilantly against the approaches of temptation. Learn, secondly, from this subject, the necessity of prudence in making a profession, but of integrity in acting up to it when it is made. Learn, then, in the last place, the necessity of decision of character in matters of religion. (*J. Thorp.*) *The Saviour's look upon Peter*.—Doubtless it was a look of blended significance. There must have been in the Saviour's countenance an expression of mingled emotions. At a single glance there may have been conveyed to Peter what would have required many words to express. I. It doubtless spoke to him REPROOF. An impressive reminder of the great wrong he had done. II. It was, too, a GRIEVED LOOK. Such

a look as a kind mother turns upon a wayward son who has wronged her. III. It was, at the same time, a PITYING LOOK. The Saviour felt for Peter in his wretched condition. Forgetting His own great impending sorrows, He had it in His heart to sympathize with poor, unhappy Peter. He knew that, notwithstanding all he had done, he was a genuine disciple, and that the time of reflection would soon come, when he would be overwhelmed with grief. IV. And, still further, it was a FORGIVING LOOK. The Lord knew how deep would be Peter's self-reproach and anguish of soul when he came to himself, and that he would be tempted to despair of forgiveness. So by this look he would inspire him with hope. (*Christian at Work.*)

Knowledge of self through Christ.—He remembered. He realized under the eye of Jesus what he had been doing. A glance of God into his soul revealed his loss of himself. Beholding his Lord, as he stood in the calm triumph of His Divine manhood looking into his timid soul, he could not help knowing himself in his weakness and shame. Not a word was spoken. God does not need to speak to judge us. He will only need to look upon us. One look of divinity is enough to convince of sin. Peter the denier, under the eye of the Son of God, became at once Peter the penitent. And we know how afterwards Peter the penitent became Peter the man—firm as the rock—the true Peter, hero of faith, and made worthy at last of meeting and returning with joy the look of the risen and ascended Lord among the sons of God on high. These effects of Jesus' flashings of God upon Peter show very simply and plainly Jesus' method of convincing men of sin, and of lifting them up

through repentance to real and everlasting manliness. No man ever felt Jesus' eye upon him, and went away without a look into his own heart which he had never had so clearly before. Some men went away from Christ to the judgment. The thoughts of many hearts, as Simeon foresaw, were revealed by him. Jesus' gospel, therefore, being thus intensely personal, real, and revealing, is the most honest thing in this whole world. It is no form, no fiction of life, no exaggeration of feeling, no mere speech about God and the world to come; it is the one essentially and perfectly honest thing in this world of words and forms and fictions of life. Now let me specify two or three particulars which are brought out in Jesus' revelation of men to themselves. He made men, whom His divinity searched, understand that they were personally responsible for their own real characters. He did not allow His disciples to condemn men for their misery, or their misfortunes, or the consequences of their circumstances, or any of those influences which meet from beyond their own wills in men's lives. But He made every soul of man realize that within life's circumstances there is a living centre of personal responsibility. Jesus made men understand, also, that in their sinning they have to do with personal beings. We do not sin against abstractions, or against a system of commandments only; we are persons in a society of persons of which God is the centre and the source. All sin is against the realities of a most personal universe. Sin strikes against beings. Peter sinned against the Lord who had chosen him, and who was about to die for him. The sinfulness of sin is not that it is simply a transgression of a law; but it beats against love. All sin is against love, against all love; for it is sin against the living, personal being of God. Again, as Jesus Christ showed men themselves in their sins, he showed them also that those sins of theirs are something which God cannot endure for ever. They must not be. They shall not be. God cannot always endure them, and be the God He is. Jesus said He did not come to judge the world; and yet again He said, "Now is the judgment of this world." God on high cannot suffer us to go on in this way for ever. He must redeem us and make us like Himself, or He must do something else worthy of Himself with us. This is morally certain. And one thing more is clear as a star in the mystery of Godliness. There is one thing more which we need to know which Jesus makes as bright as day in His gospel of God to man. When Peter was at Jesus' knees saying in the first honest instinct of a man who saw himself, "I am a sinful man," Jesus stood over him radiant like a God, and said, "Fear not." Such is God's lovely attitude towards every penitent at the feet of His Almightyness! Fear not! Sin is forgiven and all its darkness made bright in the love which reveals it. The cloud of our sky becomes a glory at the touch of the sun. If we will not come to the light to be made known and to be forgiven, then we remain in the darkness. Penitence is holding ourselves up in God's pure and infinite light, and letting Him shine our darkness away. Fear not; sin is vouchsafed forgiveness in the same love which it shows to sin, and condemns it. (*Newman Smyth, D.D.*)

Peter went out, and wept bitterly.—Peter's repentance:—I. OBSERVE HOW NEAR THE SIN OF PETER COMES TO THAT OF JUDAS. 1. Peter, like Judas, surrenders his Lord to His foes. 2. The sin of Peter, like that of Judas, was the act of an intimate and confidential friend. 3. This denial by Peter occurred immediately after the Supper, and after witnessing the agony of Christ in the garden. 4. Peter's denial was in the face of his own protestations to the contrary, and of Christ's recent and explicit warning. 5. Peter's denial was aggravated by repetition, and at each repetition he contracted deeper guilt. 6. This sin of Peter was committed in the very presence and hearing of the Lord. II. YET, WITH ALL THESE AGGRAVATIONS, THE SIN OF PETER MUST BE DISCRIMINATED FROM THAT OF JUDAS. 1. For instance, Peter's sin was sudden, under strong temptation; while the sin of Judas was deliberate and long-premeditated. 2. Then, too, the motives by which the two were prompted—Peter, by a natural fear and the instinctive love of life; Judas, by the most sordid of all the passions that move the human heart—the base love of gold. 3. In Peter's case there was no heart-denial of his Lord; it was only of the lips. 4. In Peter there was only the suppression of his discipleship. III. CONSIDER THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE TWO MEN AFTER THEY ARE BROUGHT TO A RECOGNITION OF THEIR GUILT. 1. Judas is judicially abandoned; Peter, only temporarily deserted. 2. In the case of Judas there was only remorse; in that of Peter, sincere repentance. 3. In Judas there was a total and final rejection of Christ; in Peter, a loving return to Him. 4. Judas sealed his guilt by his suicide; Peter sealed his repentance by a life of consecration to his Master's service. Concluding reflections 1. You have the plainest evidence, in all the actions of Judas and of

Peter, that they were free and responsible, acting under the power of motives. 2. We see in Peter's fall the wonderful discipline by which he was graciously prepared for his work, revealing to us that paradox of the gospel, how grace, in its power, brings evil out of good, and transmutes the poor, fallen, erring sinner into the accepted messenger of God. 3. These two, Judas and Peter, are the types, respectively, of the only two classes of sinners. The difference between sinner and saint is found in the behaviour of the two in respect to their sins—the one persisting in it, the other weeping bitterly. (B. M. Palmer, D.D.)

CHAPTER XXIII.

Vers. 1-7.—Then said Pilate.—*The conduct of Christ contrasted with the conduct of other public characters*.—I. Amongst the philosophers of the heathen world not one can be named, who did not admit some favourite vice into his system of good morals; and who was not more than suspected of some criminal indulgence in his own practice; not one, whose public instructions were without error, and whose private conduct was without reproach. In the character of Jesus Christ no such imperfection can be traced. In His addresses to His followers, He taught virtue unpolluted by impurity: and in His practice He exemplified what He taught. II. In the most distinguished of our contemporaries, we always find some weakness to pity or lament, or only some single and predominant excellence to admire. In each individual the learning or the activity, the counsel or the courage, only can be praised. We look in vain for consistency or perfection. The conduct of Christ betrays no such inequality. In Him no virtue is shaded by its correspondent infirmity. No pre-eminent quality obscures the rest. Every portion of His character is in harmony with every other. Every point in the picture shines with great and appropriate lustre. III. In the heroes, which our fables delight to pourtray, we are continually astonished by such exploits as nothing in real life can parallel; by the achievements of sagacity that cannot be deceived, and of courage that cannot be resisted. We are either perplexed by the union of qualities and endowments incompatible with each other, or overpowered by the glare of such excellencies and powers, as nature with all her bounty never bestowed upon man. Jesus Christ has surpassed the heroes of romance. In contemplating His character we are not less surprised by the variety of His merits, than delighted by their consistency. They always preserve their proportion to each other. No duty falls below the occasion that demands it. No virtue is carried to excess. IV. In the most exalted of our fellow-creatures, and even in the practice of their most distinguished virtues, we can always discover some concern for their personal advantage; some secret hope of fame, of profit, or of power; some prospect of an addition to their present enjoyments. In the conduct of Christ none of the weakness of self-love can be discovered. "He went about doing good," which He did not appear to share, and from which He did not seem to expect either immediate or future advantage. His benevolence, and His alone, was without self-interest, without variation and without alloy. V. It is a very general and a very just complaint, that every man occasionally neglects the duties of his place and station. The character of Christ is exposed to no such imputation. The great purpose of His mission indeed, appears to have taken entire possession of his thoughts. VI. The pretended prophet of Arabia made religion the sanction of his licentiousness, and the cloak of his ambition. VII. An impostor, of whatever description, though he has but one character to support, seldom supports it with such uniformity as to procure ultimate success to his imposition. Jesus Christ had a great variety of characters to sustain; and He sustained them all without failure and without reproach. VIII. Men in general are apt to deviate into extremes. The lover of pleasure often pursues it till he becomes its victim or its slave. The lover of God sometimes grow into an enthusiast, and imposes upon himself self-denial without virtue, and mortification without use or value. From such weakness and such censure the character of Christ must be completely exempted. He did not disdain the social intercourse of life, or reject its innocent enjoyments.

IX. While we are displaying the various merits which adorned the personal character of Christ, one excellence more must not be passed in silence; the rare union of active and passive fortitude; the union of courage with patience; of courage without rashness, and patience without insensibility. X. Such, then, is the unrivalled excellence of the personal character of Jesus Christ. Such is the proof which it affords that He was "a teacher sent from God"; and such is "the example which He has left us, that we should follow His steps." (*W. Barrow.*) *Pontius Pilate*.—I. PILATE WAS WEAK—MORALLY WEAK. He sinned in spite of his better self. He was thoroughly convinced of the innocence of his prisoner. His conscience forbade him to inflict punishment. He made strenuous efforts to save Him. And yet, after all, He gave Him up to death, and furnished the soldiers needed for carrying out the sentence. How many in our day resemble him! Are not some of you as weak as he was? Have you not had convictions of duty as strong as his, and maintained them for a while as stoutly as he did, and yet failed at last to carry them out? Remember that convictions of sin and duty do not keep men from sin; nor do they excuse sin. Beware of substituting religious knowledge or sentiment for religious principle. II. PILATE WAS WORLDLY. This explains his weakness. His feelings were overpowered by a selfish regard to his own interest. III. PILATE WAS IRRELIGIOUS. Here was the secret of that fatal power which the world exerted upon him. He was worldly because his life was not guided and governed by true religion. "This is the victory that overcometh the world—even your faith." (*R. P. Pratten, B.A.*) *Pontius Pilate*.—Let us consider, then, the strange behaviour of Pontius Pilate after our Lord's formal acquittal. I. HE DECLARES THE SAVIOUR TO BE INNOCENT, BUT HE DOES NOT SET HIM FREE. II. HE DOES NOT SET HIM FREE, BUT ENDEAVOURS TO BE FREE FROM HIM—to get rid of Him. III. HE ENDEAVOURS TO GET FREE FROM HIM, BUT RECEIVES HIM AGAIN AND AGAIN. I. "I find no fault in this Man"—Pilate has minutely and thoroughly investigated the case of Him who was so eagerly accused by the people, and the result of this examination was the Lord's acquittal. Well done, Pilate! you have taken the right way; only one step more, and the case will be honourably concluded! As a just judge you are bound to follow up your verdict by release. The little bit of nobleness which Pilate showed on his first appearance was fast declining, as generally happens when it is not founded on the fear of God. When a man has gone as far as to question what truth is, he will soon follow up his questioning with, What is justice? what is faith? what is virtue? The inevitable result of a perverse state of heart is that it must daily beget new perversities. Because Pilate was not moved by love of truth, it was impossible for him to be moved for any length of time by a sense of justice. He declares the Saviour to be free from guilt, but he does not set Him free. Even since the times have become Christian, and since men have become members of the Church of Jesus Christ, it is an universal fact that Pilate's conduct has been repeated. Men have declared the Saviour free, but have not set Him free. Pilate was a Roman, and a Roman maxim it has ever been in Christianity to pay every possible outward respect to the Saviour, but not to set Him free. The Romish Church especially bound what ought especially to be free—the Word of Jesus Christ—the Bible—the gospel. They declare the Word of the Saviour to be free, but do not set it free. In the Middle Ages, under plea of its preciousness, they bound it with iron chains. At present they bind it by the approval of bishops, by episcopal approbation. Even in these days this Church has dared to brand Bible Societies as plague sores. Pontius Pilate was a Roman to whom truth was nothing, justice little, his own interest everything; therefore he did not set the Saviour free, though he declared Him to be entitled to freedom. And a Roman maxim it has been to this very day to declare the Saviour free, but not to free Him. It is to the glorious Reformation that the honour belongs of having broken the chains by which Rome bound the Saviour. In the Church of the Reformation, our dear evangelical Church, Jesus is not only declared to be free, but is free. Freely He governs our Church; freely He communicates with every believing soul. May we, therefore, say that Pilatism exists no longer in evangelical Christianity? Ah! no, dearly beloved, we must sorrowfully confess that Satan did not fail to find an entrance again through a back door. For, among the numerous Christians who glory in Protestant freedom, many do not allow the Saviour to speak except at church on Sunday. He is not allowed to raise His voice during the week, nor in their own homes. What is this but declaring the Saviour to be free, and keeping

Him bound? They bind Him to altar and pulpit; they hear Him every week or fortnight, but further advance is denied their Saviour. He is not permitted to leave the church nor go with them to their home. Mere church attendance is Pilatism; the Saviour is declared to be free, but He is not set free. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." But, my friends, for us who have given up our heart to the Saviour, to occupy a place in His throne-room, would it not be a subtle Pilatism if we lock the Saviour within the heart, and not set Him free for the whole life? Not only in the heart is the Saviour to have free range, but in the home, in your nursery and drawing-rooms, in your workshop, in your society, in your daily life and conversation, He is to be free, and the free ruler of your life. Oh, my friends, strive against Pilatism! Do not lock your Saviour in your church, nor in your heart, but allow Him to dispose of you how He will and where He will. The more He is allowed to shape a man's life, the more freedom will that man enjoy. Therefore, once again, away with Pilatism! Do not only declare the Saviour to be free, but set Him free indeed! II. PILATE DOES NOT SET THE SAVIOUR FREE, BUT ENDEAVOURS TO GET FREE FROM HIM. He does not give Jesus His liberty, for fear of the people. He endeavours to get free from Jesus because he fears Jesus. The quiet dignity of the King of Truth grows more and more painful to him. The whole matter, which at first he thought a great ado about nothing, is taking such a turn that he feels quite uneasy. "Is He a Galilæan?" he asks. The Saviour was no Galilæan. It is from Bethlehem of Judæa that the Messiah of Israel has come! but the people say He is a Galilæan. This is sufficient for Pilate. He had oftentimes trenched upon Galilee, and had thereby become the bitter enemy of Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee. But now it is most opportune to him, that Galilee is a province beyonds his jurisdiction. Let Herod burn his fingers in this affair. At least, he, Pilate, will be rid of a case which is getting more and more troublesome. Do you know those people that practise in our day the most contemptible kind of Pilatism? They cannot explain the powerful impression which the exalted personage of the God-man makes upon man. The pale beauty of His cross appears an unnatural rebuke to the frivolous ideal of life which they have entertained. His stretched-out pierced hands are quivering hints and points of interrogation, and signs of pain and sorrow. His humiliating crucifixion bears so loud an evidence against their pride of ancestry, pride of culture, and pride of riches, that they endeavour to get free from Him at any cost. "He is a Galilæan": thus runs the old Jewish lie, which history confuted long ago. A Galilæan Rabbi could never—no, never—become so potent, that eighteen centuries would circle around him like planets round the sun. But those men who endeavour to get free from the God-man, will always grasp at this straw of a miserable fiction. He is a Galilæan! He is a Galilæan, and they think they have discovered the magic spell by which they can with some show of reason get rid of their belief in the God-man, who has given His life a ransom for a sinful world. "He is a Galilæan," they say, and with that they send the Saviour away. They send Him to sceptical philosophers, urging, "Natural philosophy has explained this, and teaches us that miracles are impossible. Philosophy is a competent judge of the person of Jesus Christ, and of His miracles; and philosophers, not we, have to decide. And we submit to their judgment." It makes them somewhat uneasy to know that there are likewise believing philosophers; that a Copernicus begged from the Crucified no other mercy than was received by yonder malefactor; that a Kepler, a Newton were true followers of Jesus, and believed in His miracles, and had faith in His words. On this point, therefore, they maintain a silence as deep as that of the tomb. Or they send the Saviour to sceptical historians, saying, "It is by history that the authenticity of the Bible is to be tested, and this science has broken a staff over the Scriptures." It is nothing to their purpose that believing historians place a high value on the Bible, that one of them has pronounced Jesus Christ to be the very key of history. This testimony, however, they carefully overlook. Or they send the Lord Jesus to sceptical theologians, saying, "There are so many theologians who deny the divinity of Jesus, and theologians ought certainly to be possessed of the true knowledge." They overlook the believing divines who exist too, and who ought to know at any rate as well as they. In short, fidelity and justice concerning the Lord Jesus are quite out of the question with those people. They

will get free from the Lord Jesus at any hazard; therefore they seek for Herod wherever they may be found. III. IMPOTENT STRUGGLING! Foolish prudence! After all, they will not get free from the Saviour. Having entered a man's life, Jesus comes again and again, this way or that way, whatever may have been the turnings and windings of that life. Pilate endeavours to get free from the Saviour, but gets Him again and again. Pilate gets Jesus again from Herod, and receives Herod's friendship besides. Pilate, on his part, to be sure would fain have renounced his friendship for Herod, if by so doing he had only got rid of the Lord Jesus. But his new friend had sent back the Saviour, and thus Pilate was obliged, much against his will, to concern himself further with the Saviour, and bring to an end a case which to himself was becoming more and more painful. And in the same condition in which Pilate was will all those who think and act like him ever be. Having once met the Saviour, they never get entirely free from Him, however they may struggle and whatever cunning devices they may make to accomplish this end. In the end they will avail nothing. Jesus comes again. His form assumes a more and more sorrowful aspect. His face becomes more grave and clouded. Jesus comes again. Each sound of the church bell reminds them, each Sunday admonishes them of Him. Jesus comes again. They do not get free from Him. They anxiously debar their home, their family, from His influences. Nevertheless, since the Spirit bloweth where it listeth, they cannot prevent their wives, nor daughters, nor sons from being converted; and every converted one is a living reproach to the unconverted. They cover, as it were, their heart with a coat of mail; they palisade their conscience; they fall into the habit of smiling at holy things; they affect the utmost indifference towards the God-man. Thus they live, thus they die; and when they are dying, again Jesus Christ is there; and in their dying moments His word sounds: Son of man, how often would I have drawn thee unto Me, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not! (*Emil Quandt.*) *The character of Pilate:*—The estimate which history has put upon Pilate is fair. We talk of artistic combinations and poetical justice. But no art and no poetry can come up to that dramatic intensity of contrast in which history makes such a man as Pilate judge and executioner of Jesus Christ. It is as in another generation when such a man as Nero sits as judge of such a man as St. Paul. We know Pilate by ten years of his jurisdiction. A cruel Roman viceroy, he had created and had quelled more than one rebellion by his hard hand. He is one of a type of men such as you find in Napoleon's history, who have their eye always on the Emperor, and always mean to win his favour. For the Pilates of the world this backward look to their chief supplies the place of law. Does Tiberius wish it? Then one answers "Yes." Does Tiberius dislike it? Then one answers "No." In the long run such a second-hand conscience fails a man. It failed Pilate. Tiberius recalled him. But Tiberius died before Pilate could appear at court. And, then, neglected by everybody, scorned, I think, by those who knew him best, Pilate, who had no conscience now he had no Tiberius, killed himself. Was there, in that loathsome despair of the life of a favourite whose game is played through, was there always the memory of *one* face, of *one* prisoner, of *one* execution? Did he remember that day when he tried to wash off guilt with water? Did he remember how the sky blackened on that day, and men said nature itself testified against the wrong which that day saw? (*E. E. Hall, D.D.*)

Vers. 8-12. When Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad.—*Divine reserve; or, Christianity in relation to our mental moods:*—I. THAT ALL SUBJECTS REVEAL THEMSELVES ACCORDING TO THE MENTAL MOOD IN WHICH THEY ARE EXAMINED. That which is looked for, is found or thought to be found. The same person or principle examined through the respective media of sympathy and antipathy, will reveal aspects the most different. It is of vital importance to remember this fact in all our investigations of creeds, or balancings of contradictory evidence, so that we may escape both the traductions of prejudice and the blindings of partiality. The non-recognition of this truth has induced the grossest misrepresentations of social life, of individual belief, and of denominational doctrine. II. THAT THE DIVINE BEING DISCRIMINATES OUR MENTAL MOODS. Apparently, Herod was in a pleasing state of mind. Superficial observers would have been delighted with his animated and cordial bearing. What could be more gratifying to Christ than that Herod was "exceeding glad" to see Him? There was no royal hauteur, no cold rebuff,

no vengeful triumph. Why, then, that awful silence? Could Herod have done more to conciliate the favour of his renowned prisoner? Was it not an act of incomparable condescension for Herod to wear a smile in the presence of a reputed blasphemer and seditious? For Christ's significant reserve there must be some peculiar but satisfactory reason. It was not fear of the judge, for He was the judge's Creator and Sovereign; it was not contempt, for He entertains a just regard for all the creatures of His hand; it was not constitutional sullenness, for none could be more open and engaging than He; it was not consciousness of guilt, for His most rancorous foes failed in their attempts at crimination. Why, then, did Christ thus treat a man who was "exceeding glad" to "see Him"? The only satisfactory answer which we can suggest is that Herod's gladness did not arise from a proper cause; or, in other words, was no true index to his mental mood. Christ looked deeper than the smile which lighted Herod's countenance, or the mere blandishment of his manner; He discriminated the mood of mind, and acted accordingly. III. THAT CERTAIN MENTAL MOODS DEPRIVE MEN OF THE RICHEST BLESSINGS OF CHRISTIANITY. Why that solemn silence on the part of Christ? Because of Herod's mental mood. The judge wished his curiosity gratified, he had heard of the great wonder-worker, and longed to behold His feats of skill, or His displays of power. Christ knew the treatment proper for the oblique-minded judge, and acted accordingly: He would not work miracles to gratify a king; He would smile on a child, or dry the tear of misery, but He would not court the applause or solicit the patronage of royalty. To whom, then, will the Lord Jesus deign to reveal Himself in tender speech or loving vision? Is there any intellect on whose conflicts with scepticism He will bestow His attention? Is there any heart on whose strugglings with sin He will lift up the light of His countenance? Since He was silent before Herod, will He be communicative to any of His creatures? He shall answer for Himself, "To this man will I look." Suppose the Divine speaker had paused here, what inquisitiveness and suspense would have been occasioned! "To this man"; to which man, blessed Lord, wilt Thou look? to the man who has slain kings, and wandered to the throne of power through the blood of the warrior and the tears of the widow? to the man who has enrolled his name among the proudest of conquerors? to the man who boasts attachment to the cold exactitudes of a heartless theology? to the man arrayed in purple, and enshrined in the splendour of a palace? is this the man to whom Thou wilt look? Nay! 'Tis a grander spectacle which attracts the Divine eye—to the man "that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at My word" (Isa. lxi. 2). Here, then, we have two conditions of Divine communion, viz., contrition and reverence: apart from these there can be no spiritual fellowship. In Herod these conditions were not found; hence Christ was dumb! So with us: if we would truly worship God we must fulfil the conditions herein demanded. To be more distinct on this part of the subject, I may enumerate a few classes of hearers, whose mental moods deprive them of spiritual enjoyment: 1. Men of violent personal antipathies. Such persons confound the minister with his message; so that if any whim has been assailed, or any favourite dogma contravened, they forthwith resort to misinterpretation, they turn every appeal into a personality, and that which was intended as a blessing they pervert into a curse! God will not commune with them: they fulfil not the conditions of fellowship—they are neither contrite nor reverent—and Christ answers them nothing! 2. Men of large speculative curiosity. Herod belonged to this class. They wish to pry into the secrets of the Infinite: not content with the ample disclosures which the Divine Being has graciously granted, they would penetrate into the deepest recesses of His nature, and scale the loftiest altitudes of His universe. They conceive a philosophic dislike for the common-place truths of Christianity; and regard with patronising pity the minister who lingers on the melancholy hill of Calvary. Such men would understand all mystery: they would break the silence of the stars, or detain the whirlwind in converse: they would summon angels from their high abode and extort the secrets of heaven, they would even dare to cross-examine the Deity Himself on the propriety of His moral government! God will answer them nothing. 3. Men who accept rationalism as their highest guide. They reject all that reason cannot comprehend. Their own intellect must see through every subject, otherwise they consider it as worthy only of repudiation. They read the New Testament as they would read a work on mathematics, or a treatise on physical science, expecting demonstration of every point. Such men leave the Bible with dissatisfaction. Christ treats them with silence: their flippant questions elicit no response: their

feeble reason plunges in hopeless confusion—Infinitude refuses to be grasped in a human span, and Eternity disdains to crowd into one little intellect its stupendous and magnificent treasures. 4. Men who delight in moral darkness. Such men have no objection to theological discussion; they may even delight in an exhibition of their controversial powers, and, at the same time, hate the moral nature and spiritual requirements of the gospel. So long as attention is confined to an analysis of abstract doctrines they listen with interest, but the moment the gospel tears away the veil from their moral condition—reveals their depravity—upbraids their ingratitude—smites their pride—and shakes their soul with the assurance of judgment and eternity, they sink back into sullenness, they take refuge in infidelity, or they curse and blaspheme! Your Herods care not for moral betterance; they wish their fancies gratified—they desire their questions answered, but they persist in following the devices of their imagination, and imprisoning themselves in the bond-house of bestial passion. The text suggests—IV. THAT MEN SO DEPRIVED RESORT TO OPPOSITION. "And Herod with his men of war set Him at naught, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate." This is a striking illustration of the manner in which the truth has been treated in all ages. Men have approached the Bible with foregone conclusions, and because those conclusions have not been verified they have revolted, and assumed an antagonistic attitude. Ample illustration of the proposition might be adduced from the history of infidelity, bigotry, and persecution: but instead of lingering on this department of the subject we hasten to indicate the practical bearing of the thesis on the matter more immediately in hand. As an assembly of men responsible in some degree for the dissemination of Christian truth, it is important to understand how we can best fulfil our mission. In prosecuting this inquiry let me remind you of three things: 1. That the Bible is God's appointed representative. What Christ was to Herod, the Scriptures are to us, viz., the embodiment of Divine truth and love. The very fact of our having the Bible, involves a tremendous responsibility. 2. That the Bible must be approached in a sympathetic spirit. 3. That we are responsible for our manner of reproducing the Bible. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *Imitating the silence of Christ:*—There lived in a village near Burnley a girl who was persecuted in her own home because she was a Christian. She struggled on bravely, seeking strength from God, and rejoicing that she was a partaker of Christ's sufferings. The struggle was too much for her, but He willed it so; and at length her sufferings were ended. When they came to take off the clothes from her poor dead body, they found a piece of paper sewn inside her dress, and on it was written, "He opened not His mouth." (*W. Bazendale.*) *Remarkable reticence:*—Moltke, the great strategist, is a man of lowly habits and few words. He has been described as a man "who can hold his tongue in seven languages!" (*H. O. Mackey.*) *Herod Antipas: religious curiosity:*—Most of us will admit that this is an age of much curiosity about religion. The phrase would seem to include three things. First, curiosity about religion as an interesting phase of human thought. Then, curiosity about religion as exhibited in the picturesque and commanding personages who have founded new faiths. But yet again there may be curiosity about religion as a possible manifestation of the extra-natural or supernatural. Revivalism and spiritualism make the flesh creep not altogether unpleasingly. August and ancient ceremonials haunt the imagination with their weird magnificence. The verses which I have read bring before us the very type of irreligious or non-religious curiosity about religion, and of the punishment which awaits it. I. In the passage itself let us note, in the first place, THE DEALINGS OF HEROD ANTIPAS WITH JESUS. 1. Herod did not take any active part in the greatest tragedy of time. 2. It will be necessary for our purpose to consider, secondly, Herod's position in the religious world of his day. That he was a Sadducee would seem to be certain from profane history, and from a comparison of St. Matthew with St. Mark. 3. The character of Herod Antipas may be thought too black to contain even a warning for any of us. He was but a promising pupil in the school of which Tiberius was a master; a meaner trickster, a punier liar, a feeblor murderer. He was "the fox," as our Lord called him, not the wolf. Yet in one respect he was not so unlike some of us. A mist of superstition hung over the unclean pool of lust and hatred which he had made his soul. He was alternately repelled and attracted by Christ. That he was not incapable of religious curiosity the text sufficiently witnesses. Some in our day might exclaim that it was perhaps unfortunate that an opportunity was lost of gratifying the curiosity of a person so interesting—as if Christ was incarnate to amuse *dilettanti*. But He

who knows all men and what is in man knew better. The blood-stained hands are held out "half caressingly." The voice which commanded the head of John Baptist to be given to the daughter of Herodias pours forth its flood of superficial questions. He will not waste one miracle or one word. As they of old loved to teach, the silent Jesus, working no sign, is a prophecy and a sign to us. "He answered him nothing." II. The whole incident thus becomes full of lessons to us. A thoughtful, meditative reader stops in awe. If we feel the awfulness of that silence, we shall, I think, recognize the truth of that which I am about to say. There is, no doubt, a sort of curiosity about religion which is the necessary result of quickened intellectual, nay, of quickened spiritual life. But the smiting of the people of Beth-shemesh is not recorded for nothing. Free inquiry is one thing, free-and-easy inquiry is another. If we play with God, it is at our own risk. The question is—what do you believe? We stand fronting eternity, not with the many propositions which we affect to believe or think we believe, but with the few which we do believe. Can we make an act of faith in God? We see Him standing mute before the curiosity of Herod Antipas, and we say, "Save us, oh save us, from that silence!" (*Bishop Wm. Alexander.*) Our Lord before Herod:—I. HEROD BEFORE JESUS. 1. See idle curiosity at its best. 2. Idle curiosity disappointed. (1) Our Lord came not into this world to be a performer. (2) Herod had already silenced the Voice; no wonder he could not now hear the Word. (3) Herod might have heard Christ hundreds of times before if he had chosen to do so. (4) Christ had good reason for refusing to speak to Herod this time, because He would not have it supposed that He yielded to the pomp and dignity of men. 3. Idle curiosity curdles into derision. II. JESUS IN THE PRESENCE OF HEROD. Although no blows are recorded, I greatly question whether our Divine Master suffered anywhere more than He did in the palace of Herod. 1. Fully in earnest for the salvation of souls, and in the midst of His grievous passion, He is looked upon as a mountebank and a mere performer, who is expected to work a miracle for the amusement of an impious court. 2. Then to think of our Lord's being questioned by such a fop as Herod! 3. Then the ribaldry of the whole thing! 4. It was no small pain to our Lord to be silent. 5. Think of the contempt that was poured upon Him. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) The silence of Jesus:—I. PREJUDICE, WHATEVER BE ITS SOURCE, GETS NOTHING OUT OF THE SCRIPTURES. If you bring a full pitcher to a spring, you can get nothing from that spring. II. HABITUAL INDULGENCE IN SIN WILL PREVENT US FROM GETTING ANY ANSWER TO OUR INQUIRIES FROM SCRIPTURE. When you want an answer from the telephone, you not only put your ear to the instrument, but you also say to those about you, "Hush! I want to hear." If you would hear Christ you must say "Hush" to the murmuring of sin. III. THE INFLUENCE OF SCEPTICISM MAKES THE SCRIPTURES SILENT. (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*)

Ver. 18. Release unto us Barabbas.—*Barabbas or Christ!*—We speak of the choice in the Lord's passion, which is—I. A SIGN OF THE LORD'S GRACE AND PATIENCE. II. A SIGN OF THE PEOPLE'S DEEP SHAME AND GUILT. 1. It was six o'clock in the morning. Conscience-smitten, as never before, Pilate perceives the mob—the Lord in their midst, with a white garment, and the crown of thorns on His head—returning from Herod, and approaching his palace. "Suffered under Pontius Pilate"—thus it runs in our imperishable creed, surely not to erect a monument to a weak man, but to warn us every Sunday. Christ suffered under indecision and doubt, under fear of man and flattery of man. We speak, however, of the people's choice. It was the custom to release unto them a prisoner at the feast. Pilate tries to avail himself of that custom. They shall decide with perfect clearness and consciousness. The decision shall be made as easy as possible for them. They shall examine and compare. "Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you?"—thus asks Pilate. We have to make the same decision. *Here*, Christ, with the word of truth and life, which answers the deepest cravings of our heart; a light in our path which has never deceived any one. *There*, the wisdom of the world, with its devious ways and vain speech; with its final bankruptcy of all knowledge, asking, What is truth? *Here*, a love that seeks our salvation, that remains always true, even when human love is wavering; a love that never suffers the redeemed to be torn from its hand. *There*, selfishness, falsehood, and cunning; and finally, the comfortless advice, See thou to that! *Here*, forgiveness and peace; *there*, in spite of outward prosperity and splendour, a sting in the conscience that cannot be removed. *Here*, even in times of tribulation, the conviction: "The Lord is with

me; His rod and His staff, they comfort me." *There*, in times of want and distress, murmuring obstinacy and despair. *Here*, hope that lasts beyond death, and that anchors itself in the mercy and promises of God, therefore, even in dying, able to triumph: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" *There*, illusion upon illusion, for we never know what may happen, until death at last dispels every illusion! Who could still be doubtful about the choice? It is true many for a time allow others to decide for them. They move along as they are directed; they believe because others have told them so. Many avoid the decision even when commanded by the Word of God. But this is sure: There will come serious hours for each one, according to God's design and will, when he must decide of his own free will, when the refusal to decide will be practically a decision. There is only the question: Are we capable of choosing? Are we really free? Does the decision lie in our hand? Indeed, there arise unbidden so many voices in the heart against it; so many evil influences act upon us from childhood. The heart is by nature deceitful above all things—now most exultant, now afflicted unto death. Luther, as you know, wrote a little book on the bondage of the will, or "that free will is nothing." He compared it to a staff without life, a hard, cold stone. In this Luther is right, and is on the side of Paul, who says, "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom. ix. 16). It is true that deep in our hearts there is a tendency to resist the truth, a proneness to sin and sensuality, a spirit that says "No" to the word and will of God. But, on the other hand, God embraces us with His unseen arms, and in spirit speaks to us. Conscience can be silenced, but not killed; the hunger for the life and peace of God will be felt again and again. As the flower is attracted toward the sun, the bird of passage to the south, the iron to the magnet, so the human heart is drawn to God and His Word. Both are destined for each other. We can and ought to choose; that is our privilege and responsibility: our salvation is left in our own hands. II. A SIGN OF THE PEOPLE'S DEEP SHAME AND GUILT. Israel also had a choice. But in choosing it incurred the deepest shame and guilt. "And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this Man, and release unto us Barabbas!" There is no wavering nor delay, no answer to the question, "What evil hath He done?" There is no inward struggle, and no examination, but the most frivolous levity, which is swift to condemn, even in the holiest and most important cause. Indeed, Pilate warns them several times, and God's voice warns them through him, to think and to deliberate once more. But their levity turns into stubbornness and hardening of the heart. How many still decide for unbelief without hesitation, without having carefully examined! They merely repeat what others maintain; they merely follow their own natural inclination. They are opponents of faith, not because they reflect too much, but because they reflect too little. It is a simple condition of equity that one should examine before rejecting, and that one should compare what Jesus gives with what the world offers. Levity, however, does not examine, it postpones. It finds pleasure in the moment, and avoids all that is disagreeable. When hours of distress and helplessness again come upon us, our only resources are falsehood and deceit—human help and human counsel, which soon shall be changed into shame. Alas! how many there are whose thoughtlessness turns into stubbornness, and from that into entire surrender to the power of darkness. (*W. Hähnelt.*) *Barabbas or Jesus*:—All time is one history of this one manifold choice. Every evil deed since Adam's fall has been belief in Satan and disbelief in God, a choice of Satan, his service, his wages, his kingdom, his sins, and his everlasting doom, instead of the glad obedience, the beauty of holiness, the sweet harmony, the everlasting glory of the ever-blessed God. Even heathens, from the relics of paradise, knew of this choice. They pictured to themselves man, at the outset of life, standing where two ways parted, pleasure alluring him to "a way full of all ease and sweetness"; virtue, with a holy majesty, calling him to present toil, and an inheritance with God. And they unknowing! They knew that they made an evil choice, they owned of themselves sorrowfully, "I know and approve what is best, I follow what is worst." "I knew what I ought to be; unhappily, I could not do it." They knew what they chose, but not whom they chose, or whom they denied. More fearful is the contest in Israel, because they knew more. "They chose," Scripture says, "new gods." "If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord," says Joshua, when his own warfare was accomplished, "choose you this day whom you will serve; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." "How long halt ye between two opinions?" says Elijah; "if the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him."

Darker still and more evil was the choice, when Holiness Itself, "God, was manifest in the flesh." "This is the condemnation, that light was come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." But His Godhead was still veiled in the flesh. His glory was not yet revealed, "the Spirit was not yet given." More deadly the choice became, when the weakness of His human nature was taken up in the glory of His Divine, and He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Hence the evil of some subtle sin, which the soul perhaps knows not to be sin, only it knows that, were its parents by, it would not do it. It has made an evil choice; and that choice cleaves to it, perhaps, through years of helpless strife and misery. The first evil choice is the parent of all which follows. It has chosen Satan instead of God; and now, before it can again choose aright, it must undo that first choice, and will that all had been unchosen which it ever chose out of God. But there is no safety against making the very worst choice, except in the fixed, conscious purpose in all things to make the best. The last acts are mostly not in a person's own power. They "who compass themselves about with sparks" cannot themselves quench the burning. They who make the first bad choice are often hurried on, whether they will or no. Each choice, so far, involves the whole character. The one choice is manifoldly repeated. The roads part asunder slightly; yet, unmarked, the distance between them is ever widening, until they end in heaven or in hell. Each act of choice is a step toward either. It is a bitter memory to think that we have so often chosen out of God. But we can never amend our choice, unless, in bitterness of soul, we own that it has been amiss. We can never come to true penitence unless we learn the intense evil of the manifold wrongness of our choice. Hard is it to own this, that all has to be undone and begun anew, that the whole choice is to be reformed; and therefore it is hard truly to turn to God and be saved. (*E. B. Pusey, D.D.*) *Renouncing Christ*:—Albert, Bishop of Mayence, had a physician attached to his person, who, being a Protestant, did not enjoy the prelate's favour. The man seeing this, and being an avaricious, ambitious world-seeker, denied his God, and turned back to Popery, saying to his associates, "I'll put Jesus Christ by for a while till I've made my fortune, and then bring Him out again." This horrible blasphemy met with its just reward; for next day the miserable hypocrite was found dead in his bed, his tongue hanging from his mouth, his face as black as a coal, and his neck twisted half round. I was myself an ocular witness of this merited chastisement of impiety. (*M. Luther.*)

Ver. 25. He delivered Jesus to their will.—*The illegal trial and condemnation of our Lord*:—I. THE TRIAL OF CHRIST FOR HIS LIFE WAS MANAGED MOST MALICIOUSLY AND ILLEGALLY AGAINST HIM, BY HIS UNRIGHTEOUS JUDGES. 1. Was Christ thus used when He stood before the great Council, the Scribes and Elders of Israel? Then surely great men are not always wise, neither do the aged understand judgment. (*Job xxxii. 9.*) 2. Hence also we learn, that though we are not obliged to answer every captious, idle, or ensnaring question, yet we are bound faithfully to own and confess the truth, when we are solemnly called thereunto. 3. Once more, hence it follows, that to bear the revilings, contradictions, and abuses of men, with a meek, composed, and even spirit, is excellent and Christ-like. II. ALTHOUGH NOTHING COULD BE PROVED AGAINST OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST WORTHY OF DEATH OR OF BONDS; YET WAS HE CONDEMNED TO BE NAILED TO THE CROSS, AND THERE TO HANG TILL HE DIED. 1. A most unjust and unrighteous sentence: the greatest perversion of judgment and equity that was ever known to the civilized world, since seats of judicature were first set up. Pilate should rather have come down from his seat of judgment, and adored Him, than sat there to judge Him. Oh! it was the highest piece of injustice that ever our ears heard of. 2. As it was an unrighteous, so it was a cruel sentence, delivering up Christ to their wills. This was that misery which David so earnestly deprecated—"O deliver me not over to the will of mine enemies" (*Psal. xxvii. 12.*) But Pilate delivers Christ over to the will of His enemies; men full of enmity, rage, and malice. 3. It was also a rash and hasty sentence. Trial of many a mean man hath taken up ten times more debates and time than was spent about Christ. They that look but slightly into the cause, easily pronounce and give sentence. 4. As it was a rash and hasty, so it was an extorted, forced sentence. They squeeze it out of Pilate by mere clamour, importunity, and suggestions of danger. In courts of judicature, such arguments should signify but little; not importunity, but proof, should carry it. But timorous Pilate

bends like a willow at this breath of the people; he had neither such a sense of justice, nor spirit of courage, as to withstand it. 5. As it was an extorted, so it was a hypocritical sentence, masking horrid murder under a pretence and formality of law. 6. As it was a hypocritical, so it was an unrevoked sentence. It admitted not of a reprieve, no, not for a day; nor doth Christ appeal to any other judicature, or once desire the least delay; but away He is hurried in haste to the execution. Blush, O ye heavens! and tremble, O earth! at such a sentence as this. In what manner did Christ receive this cruel and unrighteous sentence? He received it like Himself, with admirable meekness and patience. He doth as it were wrap Himself up in His own innocency, and obedience to His Father's will, and stands at the bar with invincible patience and meek submission. 1. Do you see what was here done against Christ, under pretence of law? What cause have we to pray for good laws, and righteous executioners of them? 2. Was Christ condemned in a court of judicature? How evident then is it, that there is a judgment to come after this life? When you see Jesus condemned, and Barabbas released, conclude that a time will come when innocency shall be vindicated, and wickedness shamed. 3. Here you see how conscience may be overborne and run down by a fleshly interest. 4. Did Christ stand arraigned and condemned at Pilate's bar? Then the believer shall never be arraigned and condemned at God's bar. Christ stood at this time before a higher Judge than Pilate; He stood at God's bar as well as his. Pilate did but that which God's own hand and counsel had before determined to be done. (*J. Flavel.*)

The act of a moment and its results:—I. IT WAS ONLY THE ACT OF A MOMENT THIS DELIVERING OF JESUS TO THE JEWS, BUT IT SEALED THE DOOM OF PILATE. Of many important acts it may be said that they are done both suddenly and slowly. In one way or another the decision must be made in a moment: and yet these momentary acts are not so isolated from all the life as they seem. Our life is truly one; all parts and all events of it are closely joined together. Each event is at once a cause and an effect—a link which grows out of a former link, and out of which in turn a new link is formed. Thus it happens that we could account for any strange-seeming word a man speaks, or act he does, if we could only go back far enough into his history, and see deeply enough into his character. His life has been slowly moving round towards the point it now has reached. Into the house which had been slowly preparing to receive him, the guest has suddenly stepped. There has been a removal of obstacles which would have hindered, or a heaping up of obstacles which make it impossible to proceed. In a word, character and habit decide a man's action at any moment of test and trial; and character and habit are not things of a moment. It is not always unfair, therefore, to judge a man by the act of a moment, or by his attitude under sore and sudden temptation. These things reveal the secrets of his character and life, perhaps to himself, certainly to other men; well if only he is willing to learn at the first lesson where his weakness is, and so make up the breach before the next assault. Peter was walking carelessly for hours, or days, before that terrible stumbling and fall in which his very heart was broken, and all his fancied righteousness and courage fell in a moment into ruins about him. In one of the western towns of the United States, a young man stood one day in the midst of a group of gay companions. A public house was open on the one side of the street, and the building of the Y.M.C.A. on the other. He was being pressed to go into the tavern, but suddenly he turned from all his companions, and amid their jests and laughter, entered the Y.M.C.A. rooms. From that moment his path in life was plain; he had committed himself on the right side. But was there no preparation for the sudden act? I am sure there was. If we knew all the story, we would find there was a godly home behind him. Many a warning conscience had given him. In a moment Pilate yielded to the request of the chief priest, and did this fatal act; but a whole life of selfishness and self-indulgence and cruelty had prepared him for that moment, and made it certain that when the time of trial came, he would do the wrong thing. Young men may be sure of it that there will come a time when they will be suddenly put to the test. II. *PILATE TRIED TO RID HIMSELF OF THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THIS ACT, BUT HE COULD NOT DO IT.* There are some things of which we can easily divest ourselves. We can tear them off and throw them away in a few moments. I can change my dress and make myself, in outward appearance, another man. There are some things that cleave to us always and everywhere. I cannot destroy my personality; through all changes I remain myself, conscious of my own personal identity. One of the commonest excuses men make in such circumstances is, I did it under pressure. Some men are sensitive to the pressure of duty, of honour, of obligation, of truth,

of love, of pity. This pressure is irresistible. When these influences are behind them, they must go on, no matter what lies in front. It was in this way that Christ was pressed to the cross, and many of Christ's servants to the scaffold and the fire. "I cannot do otherwise, God help me," were Luther's words when this pressure was strong upon him. There are many, however, who scarcely feel such pressure at all, but who are keenly alive to every touch of popular applause, of the blame of men, of the sharp edge of ridicule, of the fear of loss and pain. By the force of popular opinion, they could be pressed anywhere, into anything. It is putting the same thing in other words to say, that men try to get rid of their responsibility for wrong-doing by throwing the blame upon others, and upon God. "It is the way I was brought up." "You see I was led into it." "A man in my position must do such things." "Every one does it, and you may as well be out of the world as out of the fashion." "It is a weakness incidental to my constitution." "Circumstances shut me in, so that I could do nothing else"; as if a man should not rather die than do the wrong! Pilate washed his hands. He tried, in the most public and solemn way, to cast off his responsibility; but though he had a better excuse than thousands have who sin against conscience and a sense of duty, we see, as we look back upon his case, that it was impossible for him to put the blame on any one else. When he delivered Jesus to the Jews, it was his own deliberate act, done against his conscience, not to speak of any supernatural warning; and he must take the consequences. And Pilate's future history was very sad and hopeless. Responsibility is a thing I cannot get rid of. The gospel of Christ does not remove it. "Every man shall bear his own burden." "Every one of us shall give account of himself unto God." If I have done wrong, let me bravely confess it, and seek the grace of God to avoid the temptation again. Thus out of weakness I shall rise to strength, and my very errors and mistakes may be stairs leading me up to God. III. PILATE'S GUILT WAS GREAT, BUT NOT SO GREAT AS THAT OF THE JEWS, WHO CHOSE BARABBAS AND REJECTED JESUS. That there are degrees of guilt is clearly taught by our Lord Jesus. Some shall be beaten with many stripes, and some with few. Christ does not exculpate Pilate, but He tells him, "He that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin." Such choices—not sudden decisions like Pilate's on partial knowledge and under pressure, but calm, quiet, almost unconscious acts of choice—we are making day by day. (*W. Park, M.A.*) *Jesus delivered to their will:*—I. WHAT WAS THIS WILL? What was the moving spring of their fierce resolution that Jesus of Nazareth should die? 1. It was their will that this stern censor of their manners and morals should die. 2. They willed that the witness to the truth should die. The Lord belonged to another world, which they did not care to enter; a world which troubled their selfish, sensual lives. It distracted them with visions, it oppressed them with dread. 3. They willed that this teacher of the people, this friend of publicans and sinners, should die. They were a ruling class, almost a caste. And such rulers hate none so bitterly as those who speak loving, quickening, emancipating words to the poor. As society was then constituted in Judæa, that meant that He or the rulers must fall. 4. There was something deeper and more malignant than this. It was their will that their Saviour should die. One cannot shake off the impression, reading the gospel narrative, that the rulers knew Him. This was the will of the Jews. But—II. WHAT, MEANWHILE, WAS THE WILL OF GOD? St. Peter explains it (*Acts ii. 23*). To understand this, we must consider—1. That it was not possible that the God-man should be holden of death. The flesh, the outer man, they killed. But what is the outer man, and what is death? They willed that He should die, but what He was, what they hated, could not die. God delivered it into their hands that they might see that they were powerless, that what they hated and had arrayed themselves against was eternal. His death made His life immortal, His witness to the truth eternal. 2. Through death the power of Christ, His witness to the truth, His witness against sin, His redemptive work for mankind, became living, nay, all-pervading and almighty realities in the world. Hidden for a moment by His death, the power reappeared, and reappeared to reign. Jesus delivered to their will was slain; but the world was soon filled with men who were charged with the spirit of Jesus, and who made His death the gospel of salvation to mankind. (*J. B. Brown, B.A.*)

Ver. 26. *Simon, a Syrenian.—The Cross-bearer:*—There is a series of very beautiful pictures in the cathedral at Antwerp, which represent Christ bearing His cross from the Prætorium to Calvary. These pictures embody the popular idea of

Christ's weakness and exhaustion. In one He stands calm and erect, in another He is bending under the weight of the cross, and in another He has fallen beneath the load that was laid upon Him. It is at this stage of the proceedings that Simon, who is passing by, is arrested, and compelled to bear the cross after Christ. I. THIS WAS A COMPULSORY CROSS. Simon had no choice but to bear it. And so it is still. No life without a cross. 1. Suffering is a cross we are compelled to bear. To some life is a perpetual cross-bearing. It may be a physical cross, or a mental cross, or a spiritual cross, but day by day they must bear it. 2. Death is a cross we are compelled to bear. 3. Every attempt to follow Christ and to bear His cross will be a determined struggle. II. THIS WAS AN UNEXPECTED CROSS. The trials we anticipate in life seldom overtake us, but those we least expect are laid upon us. The cross is often laid upon us at an unexpected time, and in an unexpected place; but there is no escape, it must be borne. 1. Sometimes the cross we bear is self-appointed. It is so with much of the physical pain and social distress we see around us. These afflictions come upon us unexpectedly, but they are often the fruit of our own folly and sin. 2. Sometimes the cross we bear is divinely appointed. If Simon's cross was unexpected, Christ's was foreseen. The cross was not a surprise to Christ. If Simon's cross was compulsory, Christ's was voluntary. III. THIS WAS AN HONOURABLE CROSS. "To bear His cross." Had not Simon rendered this brief service to Christ, his name might never have been known; but now it shall be held in everlasting remembrance. The cross ennobles man both for time and eternity; it is an honourable cross. 1. This was a cross borne for Christ. We often hear of Christ bearing the cross for sinners, but here is a sinner bearing the cross for Christ. The value of the cross depends upon the spirit in which we take it up. 2. There is something very beautiful in the thought that the cross borne for Christ is borne with Christ. Whether it be His cross or ours, we share His companionship. (*J. T. Woodhouse.*) *Bearing Christ's cross* :—The memorable thing is, that it is Christ's cross which must be borne. You are not to think that every cross is the cross which the Saviour requires you to take up. Many a cross is of our own manufacture; our troubles are often but the consequences of our own sins; and we may not dignify these by supposing them the cross which is to distinguish the Christian. Crosses they may be; but they are not the cross which was laid upon Simon, and which had first been borne by Christ. The cross of Christ is endurance for the glory of God and the furtherance of the gospel. "This is thankworthy," says St. Peter, "if a man for conscience towards God endure grief, suffering wrongfully." But our comfort is, that the cross which we must carry has been already carried by Christ; and therefore, like the grave which He entered, been stripped of its hatefulness. It might almost be said to have changed its very nature, through being laid on the Son of God; it left behind it its terribleness and oppressiveness. And now it is transferred to the disciple; it is indeed a cross, but a cross which it is a privilege to bear—a cross which God never fails to give strength to bear; a cross which, as leading to a crown, may justly be prized, so that we would not have it off our shoulders until the diadem is on our brow. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ"—and this is a cross—"happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." Together with this memorial, he would show, by a powerful instance, that in religion a temporizing policy is sure to defeat itself; so that, to fly from the cross is commonly to meet it dilated in size, and heavier in material. And he had one more truth to represent at the same time—the beautifully comforting truth, that He has borne what His followers have to bear, and thereby so lightened it, that as with death, which He made sleep to the believer, the burden but quickens the step towards an exceeding and eternal weight of glory; and that He might effectually convey all this through one great significant action, was it ordered, we may believe, in the providence of God, that as they led away Jesus carrying the cross, like Isaac with the wood for the burnt-offering, the soldiers laid hold on one Simon of Cyrene, and compelled him to bear the cross. (*H. Melville, B.D.*)

Vers. 27-31. *Daughters of Jerusalem.*—*The daughters of Jerusalem* :—I. WHY DID THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM WEEP? 1. He was innocent. All they had heard about Him was favourable. 2. He was benevolent. His gifts were uncommon and priceless. Wherever He went, He left behind Him the footprint of mercy. 3. He was the hope of the people. The glory had departed; the land was under a curse, and the people groaned under the Roman yoke. But Jesus,

although opposed to every public demonstration in His favour, had, by His teaching and example, aroused the public aspiration. II. WHY DID JESUS REFUSE THEIR SYMPATHY?—"Weep not for Me." 1. Weep not, My death is a necessity. It is not an accident, or the effect of unrestrained animosity, but the fulfilment of an old covenant, older than the earth or the heaven. Justice demands it before the prisoners of hope can come forth. 2. Weep not, I can bear it all. Hard as it may seem to bear the reproach as an evil-doer, and to suffer the enmity of those whom I have not offended, yet, my heart's desire is to suffer in the sinner's room. 3. Weep not, tears will avail nothing now. The plea of the tear is the most effective. Had the appeal of the tear been made before Pilate, humanly speaking, the evidence might have been taken, and the prisoner acquitted, but then it was too late. Weeping did not make the cross lighter, or the pains of death any the less. 4. Weep not, the course I am to take will ultimately wipe away all tears. The sorrow of to-day will be exchanged for peace and joy hereafter. The death on the cross will remove sorrow from the heart of the penitent, and tears will cease to flow. III. WHICH, THEN, IS THE RIGHT CHANNEL OF TEARS? "Weep for yourselves and for your children." Sin is the cause of sorrow. (*The Weekly Pulpit.*) *Weep not for Me, &c.* :—I. Let us consider them as addressed to that part of the multitude who had believed in His Divine mission, and submitted to His authority. Their sorrow for our Lord did not spring from the proper source. His truest disciples partook of the common misapprehensions of their countrymen about the nature of Messiah's kingdom. Yet sorrow was their proper mood of feeling. And why, my friends, should they have wept for themselves and their children, in looking upon the sufferings of their Lord? 1. We reply, because their sins occasioned Christ's sufferings. It were well for us oftener to weep thus for ourselves. 2. They should have wept for themselves and their children, because they should no more hear Christ's instructions. II. ANOTHER CLASS, BESIDES TRUE BELIEVERS, MINGLED IN THE CROWD, WHICH ATTENDED CHRIST TOWARDS CALVARY. Let us consider the application of our text to them. It was the natural feelings, which prompt us to take part in any circumstances with the distressed, and which are pained, when innocence, or, at least, benevolence is oppressed, that caused their tears to pour down. Right and worthy were these emotions, so far as they went; but they had deeper cause for sorrow than anything they thought of when they wept. They should have wept for themselves and for their children. 1. Because away from them were about to be taken the word of salvation, the admonitions and warnings of the Lord. 2. They should have wept for themselves and for their children, because this act by which Christ was taken away would speedily bring judgment upon their nation. To this our Lord had most express reference, as He showed by the language which follows the text. (*S. Martin.*) *Wherefore should I weep?*—These words are especially noteworthy, because they constitute the last connected discourse of the Saviour before He died. All that He said afterwards was fragmentary and mainly of the nature of prayer. A sentence to John, and to His mother, and to the dying thief: just a word or two looking downward, but for the most part He uttered broken sentences, which flew upwards on the wings of strong desire. I. He said to the weeping women, "WEEP NOT." There are some cold, calculating expositors who make it out that our Lord reproved these women for weeping, and that there was something wrong in their sorrow—I think they call it "the sentimental sympathy" of these kind souls. Blame these women! No, bless them again and again. It was the one redeeming trait in the dread march along the Via Dolorosa; let it not be dreamed that Jesus could have censured those who wept for Him. These gentle women appear in a happy contrast to the chief priests, with their savage malice, and to the thoughtless multitude with their fierce cry of "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" They seem to me to have shown a noble courage in daring to express their sympathy with one whom everybody else hunted to death. 1. There can be nothing ill about the weeping of these women, and therefore let us proceed to say, first, that their sorrow was legitimate and well founded. It is little marvel that they should weep and bewail when they saw the innocent one about to die. 2. I think, too, that this weeping on the part of the women was a very hopeful emotion. It showed some tenderness of heart, and tenderness of heart, though it be but natural, may often serve as a groundwork upon which better and holier and more spiritual feelings may be placed. 3. Having said this much, we now add that on our Lord's part such sorrow was fitly repressed; because after all, though naturally good, it is not more than natural, and falls short of spiritual excel-

lence. It is no proof that you are truly saved, because you are moved to great emotions whenever you hear the details of the crucifixion, for the Bulgarian atrocities excited you equally as much. I think it good that you should be moved, as I have said before, but it is only naturally and not spiritually good. This feeling, too, may stand in the way of something a great deal better. Jesus would not have these women weep for one thing, because they were to weep for another thing which far more seriously demanded their weeping. Ye need not weep because Christ died one-tenth so much as because your sins rendered it necessary that He should die. To weep over a dying Saviour is to lament the remedy; it were wiser to bewail the disease. II. Now we pass on from "Weep not" to "WEEP." Though Jesus stops one channel for tears, He opens another and a wider one. Let us look to it. 1. First, when He said, "Weep for yourselves" He meant that they were to lament and bewail the sin which had brought Him where He was, seeing He had come to suffer for it; and He would have them weep because that sin would bring them and their children into yet deeper woe. 2. I beg you now to look again into the reason why our Lord bade them weep. It was, first, for their sin, but it was next for the impending punishment of their sins. (C. H. Spurgeon.) "Weep for yourselves":—One who knew Whitefield well, and attended his preaching more frequently, perhaps, than any other person, said he hardly ever knew him go through a sermon without weeping: his voice was often interrupted by his tears, which sometimes were so excessive as to stop him from proceeding for a few moments. "You blame me for weeping," he would say; "but how can I help it when you will not weep for yourselves, though your immortal souls are on the verge of destruction, and for aught you know, you are hearing your last sermon, and may never more have an opportunity to have Christ offered to you?" (J. R. Andrews.) *The grace of tears*:—When Christ was bearing His cross, He saw some women with their children in their arms, and He said to them, "Weep not for Me, weep for yourselves." Am I wrong in saying He is looking down at this congregation now and saying, "Weep for yourselves"? Yes, we will and must compassionate ourselves. The further from the heart religion is for some of you the better; and I don't wonder at it. I can apologize for you, for I know something of the disenchantment, humiliation, and bewildering experience which comes to a man when he is sent to pity himself. Let our prayer, believing brothers and sisters, be the prayer of St. Augustine: "Lord Jesus, give me the grace of tears." Those are the tears God will one day wipe away from our eyes—£1,000 for one of them! (W. Whyte.) *What shall be done in the dry?*—*The green tree and the dry*:—A word in explanation. The green tree is Christ; the dry tree in the first judgment is the Jewish nation; and the dry tree in the last judgment is the unconverted world. By a "green tree" Christ does not mean a young and tender tree, but rather one full grown and flourishing. By "the dry," He means a tree withered, worthless, and dead. With respect to the first judgment He may mean this: "If the Romans so treat the innocent Jesus, how will they treat the guilty Jerusalem?" or He may mean, "If the Jews so punish Me, how will God punish them?" With respect to the second judgment, He surely means—"If God so bruise the innocent for the transgressions of others, how will He punish the guilty for their own iniquities?" I will now, with God's help, try to open up to you this solemn text. We have here two trees: one green—the other dry. I will show you, first, the glory and destruction of the green tree; and then, the shame and end of the dry. I. THE GLORY AND DESTRUCTION OF THE GREEN TREE. In meditating upon the glory of the green tree, we had better keep the substance of it and the shadow of it apart from each other. To do so, we will look first at the natural tree, and next at the Saviour, who is represented by it. In the midst of yonder wilderness, overrun with all manner of weeds and poisonous plants, there lies an humble patch of dry, bare ground. From the midst of the dry, barren ground, where nothing ever grew before, there rises up a young tree, tall and fair to look upon. Higher and higher it grows, until its shadow falls upon the tops of the loftiest trees around it; higher and higher, until all the trees in the wilderness are but weeds when compared with it. Now turn to the reality. Christ is that tree of God. In his birth, He grew out of ground that was barren. As a man, He grew in stature, and wisdom, and favour, and glory, until there was none such upon the face of the earth; until He stood alone as the great tree of life in the midst of the perishing; until He bid fair to stretch forth His branches to the uttermost ends of the world. Look back to the green tree. How beautiful it is! It has no crooked boughs, or twisted branches. There are no worm-eaten or

withered leaves : every leaf is as fresh as when first unfolded from the bud. There are no weather-beaten, time-stained flowers : every flower is perfect. There are no bitter or rotten fruits : all its fruits are ripe and uninjured. From the lowest root to the highest leaf, it is without a fault. Behold in this some faint picture of Jesus. His birth was as pure as the creation of an angel. His childhood was as spotless as sunshine. His thoughts were as clear as the river of God. His heart was a well of love. His soul was a great deep of light. His life was unstained by the shadow of evil. He was the admiration of angels. He was the joy of God ! Look back again to the green tree. Mark its promise. Leave that tree untouched, and what will it become ? Will it not reach up to heaven, and spread till it overshadows the world ? Who will it leave without a shelter ? What diseases will it not cure ? What hunger will it not satisfy ? Will it not grow into a universal blessing ? Behold in this the shadow of Jesus ! Had He dwelt upon earth until now, what would He not have done for mankind ! If in three years He healed such crowds of diseased persons, what multitudes would He have cured in eighteen centuries ! Oh, when we think of it, the glory of that green tree of God ! Wonderful, wonderful Jesus ! how can we now turn from the brightness of Thy glory, to the gloom of Thy sorrow ? Oh ! who shall tell the tale of destruction ? The axe and the flame from beneath, and the glittering arrows from above, stripped and rent, and levelled all Thy glory. Thou wast slain and buried off the face of the earth ! II. And now I pause ; and turn from Christ's cross to CHRIST'S QUESTION—"What shall be done in the dry ?" We have looked for a few moments at the glory and destruction of the green tree. We turn to the shame and end of the dry. Look then, O unconverted man or woman, at that dry tree. It is spring-time : thousands of plants around are putting forth green leaves ; but not a leaf appears upon it. It is summer : the gardens are white, and many-coloured with flowers ; but it stands as bare as it stood in spring. It is autumn : the orchards are golden and red with fruit ; but it remains black and dead. Sinner ! thou art that dry tree. Thousands around you are fruitful trees in the garden of God ; they bring forth ripe faith, and tender love, and sweet hope, and mellow peace, and the fruits of joy and humility. God gathers their fruit in its season, and rewards them an hundredfold. But you are barren, without faith, without love, without hope, without peace, without joy, without humility ; you stand unmindful alike of God's commands, of God's warnings, and of God's forbearance—a withered cumberer of the ground. But the evil is still worse. You are taking up the room which others might occupy with advantage to the world, were you but removed. Look again, O unconverted man or woman, at that dry tree. The showers that soften the folded buds, and spread open the tender leaves of living trees in spring-time, rain down upon it in abundance ; but, alas ; it only rots the more. The sunshine that ripens many a flower into fruit, and sweetens many a fruit into maturity, beams down upon it from day to day ; but, alas ! it only decays the faster. Sinner ! thou art that dry tree. The gospel, which has softened many hard hearts, has made yours more callous. God's mercies help to make you worse. Like the cross, the chief of all His gifts to you, they are "the savour of death unto death." Before I conclude, I would give you all a word of warning, and a word of encouragement. Remember, O unconverted man or woman, that this fearful question, "What shall be done in the dry ?" remains still unanswered. As certain as I see the sufferings of Jesus, I see the sufferings of the lost. I can doubt no more. Penitent, a word to thee. In my bitter text there is some sweetness for thee. Penitent, if they have done these things in the green tree, why should you die ? If Jesus died, why should not you live ? What if He died for you ! (*H. G. Guinness.*) *The miseries of lost souls exceed those of Christ* :—I suppose He meant, "If I, who am no rebel against Cæsar, suffer so, how will those suffer whom the Romans take in actual rebellion at the siege of Jerusalem ?" And He meant next to say, "If I who am perfectly innocent, must nevertheless be put to such a death as this, what will become of the guilty ?" If when fires are raging in the forest, the green trees full of sap and moisture crackle like stubble in the flame, how will the old dry trees burn, which are already rotten to the core and turned to touch-wood, and so prepared as fuel for the furnace. If Jesus suffers who hath no sin, but is full of the life of innocence, and the sap of holiness, how will they suffer who have long been dead in sin, and are rotten with iniquity ? As Peter puts it in another place, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God : and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God ? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly

and the sinner appear?" Note well that the sufferings of our Lord, though in some respects far beyond all conceivable woes, have yet some points about them in which they differ with advantage from the miseries of lost souls. For, first, our Lord knew that He was innocent, and therefore His righteousness upheld Him. Whatever He suffered He knew that He deserved none of it: He had no stings of conscience, nor agonies of remorse. Now, the sting of future punishment will lie in the indisputable conviction that it is well deserved. The finally impenitent will be tormented by their own passions, which will rage within them like an inward hell; but our Lord had none of this. There was no evil in Him, no lusting after evil, no self-seeking, no rebellion of heart, no anger, or discontent. Pride, ambition, greed, malice, revenge, these are the fuel of hell's fire. Men's selves, not devils, are their tormentors; their inward lusts are worms that never die, and fires that never can be quenched: there could be none of this in our Divine Lord. Again, lost souls hate God and love sin, but Christ ever loved God and hated sin. Now, to love evil is misery; when undisguised and rightly understood sin is hell. Our Lord Jesus knew that every pang He suffered was for the good of others: He endured cheerfully, because He saw that He was redeeming a multitude that no man can number from going down to the pit; but there is no redeeming power about the sufferings of the lost, they are not helping any one, nor achieving a benevolent design. The great God has good designs in their punishment, but they are strangers to any such a purpose. Our Lord had a reward before Him, because of which He endured the cross, despising the shame; but the finally condemned have no prospect of reward nor hope of rising from their doom. How can they expect either? He was full of hope, they are full of despair. "It is finished" was for Him, but there is no "It is finished" for them. Their sufferings, moreover, are self-caused, their sin was their own. He endured agonies because others had transgressed, and He willed to save them. They torment themselves with sin, to which they cleave, but it pleased the Father to bruise the Son, and the necessity for His bruising lay not in Himself, but in others. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

Ver. 33. **There they crucified Him.**—*The crucifixion*:—I. **THE PLACE WHERE OUR LORD SUFFERED.** Calvary, or Golgotha: a small eminence, half a mile from Jerusalem; the common place of execution, where the vilest offenders were put to death. 1. The place where Jesus suffered marks the malignant design of His enemies. 2. The place as mentioned by the evangelist marks His strong affection. 3. We may also add that this directs us to the place where we must look for mercy. II. **THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS**—"THEY CRUCIFIED HIM." 1. The death of the cross, though selected by Jewish malignity, would be the fulfilment of prophecy. 2. In our Lord's suffering the death of the cross there was something analogous to what we as sinners had deserved; and probably it was with a view to represent this that the Jews were suffered to crucify Him. 1. A lingering death. 2. A most painful death. 3. A death attended with reproach and infamy. 4. The death of the cross was an accursed death, both in the esteem of God and man (Gal. iii. 13). III. **THE COMPANY IN WHICH HE SUFFERED: THEY CRUCIFIED WITH HIM "TWO MALEFACTORS, ONE ON THE RIGHT HAND, AND THE OTHER ON THE LEFT."** 1. On the part of His enemies this was designed to render His death still more ignominious and shameful, and was no doubt contrived between Pilate and the chief priests. 2. But on the part of God we may see something of the wisdom of this appointment. Prophecy was hereby fulfilled, which said that He should be numbered with transgressors (Isa. liii. 11; Mark xv. 27, 28). (*Theological Sketch-book.*) *The cross a revelation of human sinfulness*:—There is a picture I have seen somewhere, painted by a celebrated artist, in which one aspect of the crucifixion is very significantly represented, or rather suggested. It is intended to bring before the mind the after scenes and the after hours of that memorable day, when the crowd had gone back again to pursue its wonted business in Jerusalem, when the thick crowd had been dispelled, and the clear light shone once more on that fatal spot called Calvary. The body of the Master had been conveyed to the sepulchre, the cross itself lies extended on the ground, and a band of little children, bright with the glow of childhood's innocence, led thither by curiosity or accident, are represented as bending over the signs left around of the bloody deed which has that day been accomplished. One of the children holds in his hand a nail, but a short time ago piercing the hand or the foot of the patient Sufferer, and stands, spell-bound with horror, gazing at it. And upon every face the painter has plainly depicted the verdict which innocence must ever give with regard to that dreadful tragedy. It is so we would desire to

consider the subject and the scene. The heart, conceiving aright the amazing impiety culminating at the cross, may well take this attitude of wonder, surprise, horror. The cross comes to be God's great indictment against man. I. The first word of the text may be looked upon as furnishing us with the first count of this indictment against man. IT SUPPLIES LOCALITY, FIXES THE SCENE OF THE DREADFUL TRAGEDY AS HERE UPON EARTH. "*There they crucified Him.*" The place where the commonest criminals were led out to die a lingering death. Earth has her mysteries, and this is one of them. The mystery of iniquity culminates here. It has lifted up its impious hands against God. II. The second word of the text furnishes us with a further point in the indictment, as indicating HUMAN AGENCY. "*There they crucified Him.*" The actors in this eventful drama were men, those among whom Christ had wrought His miracles and exercised His pure and beneficent ministry. And it was a typical act—such an act as man perpetrates every day. Envy, hatred, indifference, nailed Christ to the tree; and while these exist in the heart, what spirit shall stand excused? III. The third word of the text may be looked upon as enforcing the indictment, since it implies a DEFINITE AND DELIBERATE ACT. "*There they crucified Him.*" What hardness and callousness of heart was exhibited here! It was necessary that sin should show its exceeding sinfulness, once and for all, truly detestable that it might be detested, heinous and black as perdition, that even our sinful spirits might shrink back in awe and trembling. For this is what all sin is tending to: contempt and callousness at the sight of suffering worth, scorn of innocence, hatred of a purity which condemns our darker deeds, rejection of God Himself if His claims interfere with our selfish schemes. IV. The final and hopeful word of the text sheds a light upon this indictment, as indicating a DIVINE REDEEMER WORKING AMID ALL. "*There they crucified Him.*" Strangely enough, it is the Victim Himself who invests all else with worth, and makes the contemplation of such a deed alone profitable to us. When Socrates entered into prison, they said of it that it was a prison no longer; the dishonour and the infamy had passed away in the presence of such resplendent worth. So, but more memorably, it is at the cross. The place is nothing; the actors sink into insignificance; and of the act itself we care nothing, save as it stands associated with Him. There is a law of compensation in all things. Bend the bough of the giant oak for a moment, and it springs back with a momentum proportionate to its strength. And so it is with this Divine One who has bent before the strong blast of the adversary, for of Him it is written, "*I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.*" (*Walter Baendendale.*) *Christ lifted up*:—I. Remember that JESUS HAD HAD THE CHANCE OF BEING LIFTED UP AS A MONARCH ALREADY, AND HAD DECLINED IT. 1. Men offered it to Him (*John vi. 15; xii. 13.*) 2. The devil offered to make Him a king also (*Matt. iv. 9.*) 3. Jesus has been offered the true dominion of the whole world in this showy sort of way, over and over again in human history since. II. Understand that JESUS WAS TO BE LIFTED UP AS A SACRIFICE FOR SIN; hence, lifted on a cross, not on a throne. 1. Consider the spectacle which is proposed for our imagination. Let us seem to see the Saviour already nailed in crucifixion. Christ was lifted up as an object of scorn and contumely (see *Luke x. 35, 36.*) Christ was lifted up as an object of pity and love. At the foot of the cross a faithful few still lingered: men and women who believed in Him, and clung to Him even in these fallen fortunes to the very last. 2. Consider, once more, the force exerted by this spectacle. In the announcement of our Lord already quoted, He says that if He be lifted up He will draw all men unto Him; but in our version the single word *men* is printed in italics. Some have wasted time in asserting that Jesus meant what they name as "the elect"; some have said that He meant all Jews; and others have declared that He intended to include all *things* whatsoever, as well as men, unto His uses and His sovereignty. He would gather all money; He would collect all commerce; He would subjugate all power; He would attract all art; He would receive the trophies of all science; He would bring in to Himself the gains of all enterprise. In a word, the kingdoms of a united world should become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ. III. Recollect that THE FINAL GLORY OF JESUS CHRIST WILL BE TO BE LIFTED UP AS THE SON OF GOD AND THE PRINCE OF LIFE. 1. God raised Him up from the grave, having loosed the pains of death. This was the great argument of Simon Peter on the day of Pentecost. The raising of Jesus from the grave was the pledge of His exaltation to the throne of heaven (see *Acts ii. 30-32.*) 2. The Lord has lifted Christ up to a place at His right hand (see *Phil. ii. 9-11.*) Satan's kingdom is to be subdued (see *Rev. xii. 10.*) All the realms of this world are to give their tribute to that of Christ (see *Rev. xi. 16.*)

The kings of the earth are to bring their honour in to beautify His capital city. The Church is to be the Lamb's wife. The King's daughter is all glorious within. 3. Believers must lift Him up as the one Saviour of lost souls. It is just Christ crucified who is the only Saviour. (C. S. Robinson, D.D.) *The crucifixion of Christ*:—I. WE PROPOSE TO NOTICE THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH THE CRUCIFIXION OF OUR LORD JESUS WAS PERFORMED. 1. It will be observed that the place at which He suffered deserves our notice: "The place which is called Calvary." This place appointed for the death of Jesus, to use the language of Bishop Taylor, "was a place eminent for the publication of shame, a hill of death and of dead bones, polluted and impure." Nor must we account it to be a trifling, insignificant circumstance in the Redeemer's humiliation that this was the spot upon which we find He passed His last moments, and that He was to bow the head, and to give up the ghost. 2. You will observe that the mode of death which the Lord Jesus Christ endured at this place also deserves our notice: "When they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him." (1) A most painful death. (2) An exceedingly ignominious death. 3. It must also be observed that the society in which our Redeemer at this place suffered deserves notice. 4. The conduct of the spectators who witnessed the sufferings of our Saviour also demands our notice. II. THE CONNECTION WHICH THE CRUCIFIXION OF THE LORD JESUS HAS WITH THE COUNSELS OF DIVINE MERCY AND THE WELFARE OF THE HUMAN RACE. Here there are three important facts to be noticed. 1. The crucifixion of the Lord Jesus was the special result of the Divine foreknowledge and determination. 2. And more particularly, The crucifixion of our Lord Jesus, was a perfect and efficacious atonement for human sin. 3. The crucifixion of our Lord Jesus being clearly the result of the Divine foreknowledge and determination, and being a proper and efficacious atonement for human sin, "it was at the foundation of the mighty mediatorial empire." III. THE PRACTICAL VIEWS IN WHICH THE CRUCIFIXION OF OUR LORD JESUS SHOULD BE CONTEMPLATED. 1. We shall contemplate it as affording the most affecting exhibition of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. 2. We must contemplate our Lord's crucifixion as being an astonishing display of the riches of Divine love. 3. We must contemplate the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus, as furnishing the grand theme for ministerial proclamation. (J. Parsons.) *Emphasis*:—Scripture depends more upon the power of facts than of figures and illustrations. In human literature big words are used to overlay small ideas; verbiage is laid on as paint; the theme is smothered under the gaudy clothing; and sense is rendered tributary to sound. Not so here. When the sacred writers have anything to describe, they depend upon the force of the thing itself, and not upon the manner of its telling. All they seem to strive at is plainness; simply to chronicle the event, and let it speak for itself. I. THERE they crucified Him. Where? What land contracted the disgrace of such an act as crucifying the Lord of glory? Surely some land where He had not become known; some foreign country where His holy words had never fallen on the people's ears; some distant principality where the music of His voice had never touched the echoes into sympathy. It must have been in some uncultured territory where no temples were erected; where civilization left no foot-print, and where no god was known. Was it in some savage wild where barbarism revelled? and where untrained passion clamoured for a holocaust, and for drink-offerings of blood? No; it was not in such a land that they crucified Him. It was in the land where He was best known—the land He had hallowed by His advent, and blessed with His ministry; the land of His labours, where His mightiest miracles had been done, and His tenderest teachings had been uttered. Not in a godless realm without a temple or a shrine; but where they bowed the knee, and built the altar, and burned the sacrifice. A realm where they cried, "Lord, Lord"; where, with broad phylactery, the Pharisee rehearsed the law; and where the temple lifted its golden vanes beneath the sky, as the tribes went up with offerings to the Lord. It was in no barbarous seclusion, but in a region where the borrowed arts of tutored Rome flourished, and where the legacies of Solomon were respected and enshrined. It was in Galilee, on whose soil He made His first alighting, and whose fields and lanes, gardens and mountain groves, He had hallowed with His public ministries and His private communions. In Jewry, whose coasts were consecrated by His labours. THERE they crucified Him! II. THERE they crucified Him. Who are "they"? Who did this deed? What wicked hands were red with this precious blood? Were they those of some hireling assassins from afar, who were running riot in Jerusalem for a time? Had violence got the upper hand of law and order, and was Jesus the victim of a turbulent incursion of foreign marauders? Or had

the Roman tyrant despatched some myrmidon to put to death a teacher of doctrines which wrapped up liberty in their articles, lest men should grow too free in mind to brook subserviency as citizens? No; neither hypothesis is right. The execution bore the imprimatur of the government. It was a *State* transaction. Preceded by a trial, and surrounded with all the pomps and formulas of law. It was the act of the *people*. What people? The Jews. The very men whom He had chosen as His own peculiar and anointed ones. III. There they crucified Him. Look at the deed. Crucified Him! In a place which should have for ever resounded with the praises of His name; and by a people who should have enshrined Him in their hearts, and handed down His worship to their children's children, He was crucified. They did not decorate the land with sculptured memorials of His fame; they did not build altars to His praise; they did not wait upon Him, adore Him, love Him. No; they crucified Him. IV. Once more we shift the emphasis from the deed to the victim. There they crucified Him. O look at Him—Him who is thus pierced; look at Him, and mourn! Whom did they crucify? It was customary to wreak this punishment upon their greatest criminals. But here is Barabbas walking free; the notable robber, suspected of crimes untold, loose on the pavements of Jerusalem. Yet, "He," this Jesus, is handed over to be crucified. What! then is He a greater robber than Barabbas, that He is to be crucified? Is this why He may not be released? He has stolen away that which Barabbas could not touch. He has taken from the law its curse. He has torn from death its sting. He has despoiled the grave of its terror and its victory. Is not this a notable robber? But, O unnatural retribution which clamours for the cross, for such an One as this! Yet so it is. They crucified "Him"—Him, "the Lord of life and glory." The meek, the kind, the gentle, Man of Nazareth; they crucified Him—who goes about teaching good, spreading good, doing good; lifting the fallen, helping the needy, lighting the dark; they crucify Him. And, alas! brethren, Calvary is not merely at Jerusalem; the place of a skull is not only at Golgotha. Look over the arena you have crossed during the last week of your life, and you will traverse a Calvary there. You may see the place where the cross has been reared afresh there. You may trace the details of the drama there. Oh! think not, ye daily triflers with the grace of the loving God, that there is no place near you where Jesus is not crucified. Every spot you stain by sin; everywhere where you have trampled on the fair commands of God; everywhere where the Spirit has been quenched, and the restraint neglected—is a Calvary; and THERE, in that unwilling and listless heart of yours—THERE you "crucify afresh the Lord of glory, and put Him to an open shame." (*A. Mursell.*) *The death of Jesus, and its effects*:—In meditating upon these words, I would direct your attention, first, to the MANNER of Jesus' death, and then to its EFFECTS. 1. Jesus dies with a sense of inward freedom. The Bible speaks of the bondage of death. What a sad impression does a death-bed give of the bondage of man, how painfully does it bring home to us the fact that man is not free, that he is in servitude to death! Hence men have given Death a sceptre and a sword, have put a scythe into his hand and a crown upon his head. But in the death of our Lord we see nothing of all this. Very different is His death from ours. When death comes upon us, it generally takes us by surprise, and herein too does it prove its might, in that it makes men its captives and its prey, before ever they are aware of its approach. In most cases, Death administers a sleeping-draught before he deals the final blow; and it is in a state of sleep and of dreaminess that by far the greater proportion of the dying go their way into that long slumber. But when death came to Jesus, it found Him waking. How regal is the impression it conveys! And let me here remind you, to what an apparent chance it is we owe it, that we see Jesus die in such a kingly way. 2. Christ dies with the clearest consciousness. Would that the experience of each of you in that hour may be, that when all earthly lights have faded from your view, God, as a great sun, will fill the eye of your soul! What a genial warmth would then be shed upon the cold last hour! how would the thought of God bridge the gulf which separates time from eternity! Even Christ had thoughts of His own in the closing hours of His life; He thought on His people; He thought on all the past of His earthly history. But when the last moment came, the thought with which He bowed His head was the thought of God. He died with a clear consciousness of what lay before Him. 3. He dies with the fullest assurance. This is testified by His dying cry. He knows that it is into the hands of the Father that He is giving up His Spirit. We are not, God be praised! without instances of blessed death-beds among ourselves. II. Such a death cannot be without effect

upon those who witness it. It will quicken the pious and susceptible; it will awe the hard-hearted and ungodly. When the centurion of the Roman guard saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, "Truly this was a righteous man," or "Truly this was the Son of God." To die with perfect consciousness, like Jesus, is, indeed, a privilege which is not granted to every child of God; and it is this that makes death so sad, if not to him who suffers, at least to the relatives and friends who stand by. To witness a Christian die fully conscious and self-possessed, is such a sublime and elevating scene! And the full assurance on a bed of death with which Christ commended His spirit to His Father, He grants in mercy to His children too. (*A. Tholuck.*) *The Passion of our Lord*.—I. We should notice that these sufferings of our blessed Lord were most real; that He did indeed suffer all this, most truly; that in that body which "was prepared" for Him, He did bear every possible sting of physical agony; that He was held up in this fierce strife with pain, until He had explored all its secrets. His mind and human spirit were really the seat of every storm of deepest sorrow which the heart of man could know. II. Next to it we should ever bear in mind, beneath the Cross, that all these sufferings were—for us. We must "look on Him whom we have pierced." III. That these sufferings were NEEDFUL. It becomes us to speak with the deepest reverence when we say that anything is rendered needful by the character of God. Rather is it the truest reverence to see that thus it must have been, if man were to be redeemed at all; that there was, in the very perfection of God's character—the one fixed centre of all being—a necessity for this infinite suffering; that the nature which had sinned must pay the price of sinning, must bear the wrath it had deserved; that without it there could not be, in the world of God's holy and righteous love, forgiveness and restoration for the fallen and the separated; that "Christ must needs have suffered." (*Bishop Samuel Wilberforce.*) *The crucifixion*.—I. THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST, AS ILLUSTRATING THE FEARFUL POSSIBILITIES OF THE HATRED OF MAN. 1. This is seen in the central act of this awful tragedy. (1) The most painful of all forms of punishment. (2) The most degrading. Not a Jewish, but heathen, punishment, and that on the worst of criminals. 2. This is shown in the scene. (1) The place (Heb. xiii. 11-13). (2) The companionship. (3) The insulting taunts. II. THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST, AS ILLUSTRATING HIS ALL-POWERFUL LOVE. 1. As seen in the infinite contrast between Christ and His taunting murderers. (1) The nature of the contrast. (2) The elevation and matchlessness of the spirit of this conquest of love. 2. As seen in Christ's readiness and ability to save. (1) The contrast in the spirit of the two thieves. (2) The contrast in the eternal destiny of the thieves. (3) The condition on which their respective destiny hung. III. THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST, AS ILLUSTRATED IN ITS BEARING ON THE MATERIAL DESTINY OF THIS GLOBE, AND ON THE PRESENT SALVATION OF MEN. 1. The illustration which the darkness furnishes in respect to the changes which this earth is to undergo. (1) The greatness of the change (2 Pet. iii. 8-12). (2) The purpose of the change (2 Pet. iii. 13; Rom. viii. 19-22). 2. The illustration which the rending of the temple's veil furnishes in respect to present salvation (Heb. x. 19, 20). Lessons: 1. The ignorance of sinners of the possibilities of the evil nature within them. 2. The ignorance of sinners of the real enormity of their sins. 3. The ignorance of sinners of what God is doing for them, even when they are hating Him. (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*) *A look at the three crosses*.—Just look at the one on the right. Its victim dies scoffing. More tremendous than his physical anguish is his scorn and hatred of Him on the middle cross. If the scoffer could get one hand loose, and He were within reach, he would smite the middle sufferer in the face. He hates Him with a perfect hatred. I think he wishes he were down on the ground, that he might spear Him. He envies the mechanics who, with their nails, have nailed Him fast. It was in some such hate that Voltaire, in his death hour, because he thought he saw Christ in his bedroom, got up on his elbow, and cried out; "Crush that wretch!" What had the middle cross done to arouse up this right-hand cross? Nothing. Oh, the enmity of the natural heart against Christ! The world likes a sentimental Christ or a philanthropic Christ; but a Christ who comes to snatch men from their sins, away with Him! Men say: "Back with Him from the heart. I will not let Him take my sins. If He will die, let Him die for Himself, not for me." There has always been a war between this right-hand cross and the middle cross, and wherever there is an unbelieving heart, there the fight goes on. Here from the right-hand cross I go to the left. Pass clear to the other side. That victim also twists himself upon the nails to look at the centre cross—yet not to scoff. It is to worship. He, too, would

like to get his hand loose, not to smite, but to deliver the sufferer of the middle cross. He cries to the railer cursing on the other side: "Silence! between us is innocence in agony. We suffer for our crimes. Silence!" Gather around this left-hand cross. O! ye people, be not afraid. Bitter herbs are sometimes a tonic for the body, and the bitter aloes that grow on this tree shall give strength and life to thy soul. This left-hand cross is a repenting cross. Likewise must we repent. You say: "I have stolen nothing." I reply: We have all been guilty of the mightiest felony of the universe, for we have robbed God—robbed Him of our time, robbed Him of our talents, robbed Him of our services. This left-hand cross was a believing cross. There was no guess-work in that prayer; no "if" in that supplication. The left-hand cross flung itself at the foot of the middle cross, expecting mercy. Faith is only just opening the hand to take what Christ offers us. Tap not at the door of God's mercy with the tip of your fingers, but as a warrior, with gauntleted fists, beats at the castle gate, so, with all the aroused energies of our souls, let us pound at the gate of heaven. That gate is locked. You go to it with a bunch of keys. You try philosophy: that will not open it. You try good works: that will not open it. A large door generally has a ponderous key. I take the Cross and place the foot of it in the socket of the lock, and by the two arms of the Cross I turn the lock and the door opens. Now come to the middle cross. We stood at the one and found it yielded poison. We stood at the other and found it yielded bitter aloes. Come now to the middle cross, and shake down apples of love. You never saw so tender a scene as this. You may have seen father, or mother, or companion, or child die, but never so affecting a scene as this. It was a suffering cross. It was a vicarious cross—the right-hand cross suffered for itself; the left-hand cross for itself; but the middle cross for you. My hand is free now, because Christ's was crushed. My brow is painless now, because Christ's was torn. My soul escapes, because Christ's was bound. When the Swiss were, many years ago, contending against their enemies they saw these enemies standing in solid phalanx, and knew not how to break their ranks; but one of their heroes rushed out in front of his regiment and shouted—"Make way for liberty!" The weapons of the enemy were plunged into his heart, but while they were slaying him of course their ranks were broken, and through that gap in the ranks the Swiss marched to victory. Christ saw all the powers of darkness assailing men. He cried out: "Make way for the redemption of the world." All the weapons of infernal wrath struck Him, but as they struck Him our race marched out free. To this middle cross, my dying hearers, look, that your souls may live. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *The Cross:—*

I. THE CRUCIFIXION. The horrible fact. (1) This form of punishment was most painful, lingering, ignominious. (2) In the case of our Lord, in every sense, unjust, unpardonable, and an exhibition of frenzied selfishness and cruelty. 2. The prophetic place—"Calvary." (1) Outside the city (Heb. xiii. 11, 12; Lev. xvi. 27). 3. The wonderful prayer. (1) The lovingness of its plea. (2) The strength of its argument. (3) A model for all Christians. (4) A proof of Christ's interest in all sinners. 4. The meanness of human nature (vers. 35-37, 39). 5. The significant superscription. (1) Significant in the title given to Jesus. (2) Significant in the languages in which it was written. **II. LESSONS.** 1. The crucifixion of Christ reveals the fearful prerogative of free agency. 2. The unfathomable depths of human depravity. 3. What horrible crimes may be perpetrated in name of holiest principles. 4. How God's most gracious purposes may be wrought out by man's most heinous malevolence. (*D. C. Hughes, M.A.*) *Who crucified Jesus?—*He that says he did not crucify Christ is His greatest crucifier; he that will confess that they were his blasphemies which spat upon His face, his briberies that nailed His hands to the cross, his gluttony and drunkenness that gave Him gall to drink, his wrath and malice that pierced Him in the side, his disobedience against magistrates that bruised Him in the head, his wanton apparel that stripped Him of His robe, he that will not only die with Christ in his arms, as old Simeon did, but acknowledge that Christ died by his arms, he shall find peace at the last, and righteousness with the God of his salvation. What became of our Saviour's reed, and of His robe, we find in holy Scripture—they were taken from Him by the soldiers; but it is not written whether any man took up the crown of thorns, as if that were our share, or any man's else who is goaded with true compunction. And to say truth, all the sins which we do commit, let us make the best of them, are but thorns and briars; but if we confess them in humility, and ask pardon in tears and contrition, then they are *corona spinea*, a crown of thorns. (*Bishop Hacket.*)

Ver. 34. Father, forgive them, for they know not.—*The unknown depths of sin*.—I. HOW DO SINNERS COME AT THEIR NOTION THAT SIN IS SO TRIFLING AN AFFAIR? 1. They have a very limited view of their own feelings and purposes while in a course of sin; and infer that they cannot be very guilty, because they have never been conscious of a very evil intention. 2. Many derive their limited views of their sins from their meagre conceptions of the Divine law. 3. Others erect a bar to conviction of personal guilt out of materials taken from infirmities incident to human nature. 4. Others diminish their conceptions of their guilt, by comparing themselves with greater sinners. 5. Sin appears very different according to the different light and circumstances in which it is seen. 6. Again, delay of punishment goes to confirm men in the opinion that sin is a trifle. II. THAT THEIR VIEWS OF SIN ARE EXCEEDINGLY LIMITED, OR THAT SIN IS QUITE ANOTHER THING IN FACT, FROM WHAT IT IS IN THE SINNER'S ESTIMATION. 1. It is very different in its effects from what they esteem it. 2. Sin is very different if we consider the state of heart which gives birth to it. 3. The costly expiation for sin shows it to be no trifle. 4. The retributions of eternity will make sin to appear quite another thing from what it is here esteemed. (*P. Cooke.*) *Prayer for a murderer*.—Joseph Robbins was a bridge watchman on a railway. He was murdered by a neighbour who wanted to get his money. The murderer was caught directly after. During the trial he made this confession in open court:—"I knew that Robbins had just received his month's wages, and I resolved to have his money. I got a shot-gun and went to the bridge. As I came near to the watch-house, on looking through the window, I saw Robbins sitting inside. His head and shoulders only could be seen. I raised the gun, took aim and fired. I waited a few minutes to see if the report of the gun had alarmed any one, but all was still. Then I went up to the watch-house door, and found Robbins on his knees praying. Very plainly I heard him say: 'Oh, God, have mercy on the man who did this, and spare him for Jesus' sake.' I was horrified; I did not dare to enter the house. I couldn't touch that man's money. Instead of this, I turned and ran away, I knew not whither. His words have haunted me ever since." *Christ's pardoning mercy*.—"God is great in Sinai. The thunders precede Him, the lightnings attend Him, the earth trembles, the mountains fall in fragments. But there is a greater God than this. On Calvary, nailed to a cross, wounded, thirsting, dying, He cries, 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!' Great is the religion of power, but greater is the religion of love. Great is the religion of implacable justice, but greater is the religion of pardoning mercy." (*Senor Castelar.*) *The first word of the dying Jesus*.—"Let the first word of the dying Jesus be the subject of our meditation. It is—I. A word of peace in the storm of suffering. II. A word of love in the tumult of hatred. III. A word of excuse amid the depths of wickedness. (*A Stöcker.*) *Christ's intercession on the cross*.—I. OBSERVE THE PETITION ITSELF. 1. The magnitude of the blessing prayed for. 2. The extreme unworthiness of the objects. 3. The heinous nature of their offence. 4. The efficacy of the petition in securing the blessing prayed for. II. THE PLEA BY WHICH THE PETITION IS ENFORCED—"THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO." 1. It is such as would have not been found by any other advocate. 2. It is a plea which shows that sin has different degrees of guilt, according to the circumstances under which it is committed. 3. It is a plea which teaches us that for some there was no mercy, though there might be for those on whose behalf it was offered. There is a sin unto death, which has no forgiveness in this world, nor in that which is to come (*Matt. xii. 32*). 4. Though their ignorance afforded a plea for mercy, they were not to be pardoned without repentance. Application. 1. We see there is that in the nature of sin which surpasses all our conceptions. 2. Still, we learn that notwithstanding the evil nature of sin, there is no reason for despair, not even for the chief of sinners. 3. The conduct of our blessed Lord is set before us in this instance as an example, teaching us what must be our spirit towards our enemies and persecutors. Stephen followed this example, and we must learn to do the same (*Acts vii. 60; Matt. v. 44, 45*). (*Theological Sketch-book.*) *Christ's prayer for ignorant sinners*.—I. SIN IS FOUNDED IN MUCH IGNORANCE. 1. Men are ignorant of its extreme evil in the sight of God. 2. Men are ignorant of the baneful influence of sin upon themselves. They are not aware how it hardens the heart, stupifies the conscience, settles into habit, and at length gains complete ascendancy. 3. Men are ignorant of the pernicious effect of sin on others. Few sins are confined to the transgressor only: they have a relative influence. 4. Men are ignorant of the dreadful consequences of sin in another world. There is a future state of gracious reward for the righteous, and of awful retribution for the wicked.

II. **IGNORANCE IS NO SUFFICIENT EXCUSE FOR SIN.** In some instances it mitigates offence. 1. Ignorance itself is sin. In all cases it is so, where the capacity and opportunity of knowledge are afforded. 2. The law of God condemns all sin, every kind and degree of sin. 3. Every act of sin implies a sinful nature: it springs from a depraved heart. III. **FORGIVENESS OF SIN IS AN ACT OF DIVINE MERCY, AND THE FRUIT OF THE SAVIOUR'S INTERCESSION.** From the subject learn—1. To regard the intercession of Jesus in the forgiveness of sins. 2. To imitate Jesus in the forgiveness of injuries. (*T. Kidd.*) *Father, forgive them!*—I. **WE SEE THE LOVE OF JESUS ENDURING.** II. **WE SEE THAT LOVE REVEALING ITSELF.** Love can use no better instrument than prayer. To this present our Lord Jesus continues to bless the people of His choice by continually interceding for them (Rom. viii. 34; Heb. vii. 25). III. **WE SEE FOR WHAT THAT LOVE PRAYS.** Forgiveness is the first, chief, and basis blessing. Forgiveness from the Father can even go so far as to pardon the murder of His Son. Forgiveness is the great petition of our Lord's sacrifice. Love admits that pardon is needed, and it shudders at the thought of what must come to the guilty if pardon be not given. IV. **WE SEE HOW THE LOVING JESUS PRAYS.** Are there any so guilty that Jesus would refuse to intercede for them? V. **WE SEE HOW HIS PRAYER BOTH WARNS AND WOOS.** It warns, for it suggests that there is a limit to the possibility of pardon. Men may so sin that there shall remain no plea of ignorance; nay, no plea whatever. It woos, for it proves that if there be a plea, Jesus will find it. VI. **WE SEE HOW HE INSTRUCTS FROM THE CROSS.** He teaches us to put the best construction on the deeds of our fellow-men, and to discover mitigating circumstances when they work us grievous ill. He teaches us to forgive the utmost wrong (Mark xi. 25). He teaches us to pray for others to our last breath (Acts vii. 59, 60). That glorious appeal to the Divine Fatherhood, once made by the Lord Jesus, still prevails for us. Let the chief of sinners come unto God with the music of "Father, forgive them," sounding in their ears. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The prayer of Christ for His murderers:*—You have in these words an affecting prayer, enforced by a plea equally affecting. I. Your attention is invited to the prayer, which, in whatever light regarded, is fitted to awaken profound emotion and salutary reflection. 1. Observe the persons on whose behalf it was presented—the men who perpetrated the most flagitious and sanguinary deed that ever stained with its pollutions the face of the earth—the men who crucified the Son of God. The moral turpitude of their crime was aggravated by two considerations. In the first place, the victim of their ferocity was guiltless of the smallest offence. They were guilty of innocent blood! In the next place, their conduct was aggravated by the more than ordinary rancour, the pitiless hatred with which they pursued Him to the grave. 2. Not less remarkable is the subject of the prayer itself. It amounts to nothing less than that the men who nailed Him to the cross might live to put off the savage nature which could revel in the blood of innocence, and, through repentance and faith, be qualified for an eternal alliance with Himself in the glory of His mediatorial kingdom. Such is the compassion of Jesus Christ. 3. The time and the circumstances of this prayer render it peculiarly interesting. That which renders it worthy of particular notice, as illustrative of the grace of Christ, is, that He offered it up just at the time of His suspension on the cross, at the moment when His agonies were most severe, when His nerves were racked with keenest suffering. His languor and exhaustion might be greater afterwards, but His sensibility to pain was, perhaps, most exquisite at this critical moment. Yet this is the point of time at which He breathes forth the desires of His soul for mercy on His destroyers. There are two observations suggested by this fact. In the first place, the calmness, the self-possession, the sustained dignity of the mind of the Redeemer at this appalling crisis, demonstrate the fixed resolution with which He was bent on the design of His death. In the second place, I observe, that there was a remarkable fitness in the prayer of Jesus Christ, presented by Himself at this awful season. He suffered and He died as the Lamb of the great sacrifice for the expiation of human guilt. And being Himself both the victim and the priest, there was a peculiar fitness in His also interceding on behalf of the guilty, at the time when, as the High Priest of our profession, He was offering the blood of atonement. II. This prayer is accompanied by a plea not less remarkable and affecting. "For they know not what they do!" 1. How far were the men who crucified our Lord ignorant of the nature of the transaction in which they were engaged? That they were implicated in innocent blood they knew; but that their crime was still more deeply coloured from the supernatural dignity of their victim, of this they were ignorant. 2. How far, then, was this their ignorance a

plea for their forgiveness? The plea does not proceed, I conceive, on the concession of their comparative innocence, but upon the hopeless and inevitable ruin into which these blinded wretches were hastening to plunge. It was the dreadful ruin to which the blind madness of these men was hurrying them onwards, that awakened the pity of the Redeemer, even amidst the agonies of His own broken heart, and drew from His suppliant voice that prayer, "Forgive them, Father! they know not what they do!" Oh, how mysterious, how ineffable, the compassion of Jesus Christ! The prayer itself contained a touching proof of the infinite mercy of the Redeemer; but, if possible, the plea by which He enforces that prayer, multiplies that proof, and places His love to miserable men in a light still more affecting and overwhelming. (*N. Emmons, D.D.*)

Christ's prayer for His murderers:—The words of the dying are wont to be much observed. When men depart out of the body, they are usually more serious and divine, and speak with greater weight. Especially the speeches of the godly dying are to be regarded, who, having laid aside worldly affairs and earthly thoughts, are wholly exercised in the contemplation of heavenly things. Now certainly, if any man's dying speeches are to be observed, Christ's are much more. I. Christ's request, "Father, forgive them." "Father" is a word of confidence towards God and of love to His enemies; He mentioneth the sweetest relation. "Father" is a word of blandishment, as children, when they would obtain anything at their parent's hands, cry, "Father!" Christ speaks as foreseeing the danger and punishment which they would bring on themselves as the fruit of their madness and folly, and therefore He prays, "Father, forgive them." This act was provocation enough to move God to dissolve the bonds of nature, to cleave the earth, that it might swallow them up quick, or to rain hell out of heaven upon them. Lesser offences have been thus punished, and one word from Christ's mouth had been enough. But, "Father, forgive them." We hear nothing but words of mild pity. When He says, "Forgive," He means also convert them; for where there is no conversion there can be no remission. I shall look upon this prayer under a twofold consideration. I. Let us look upon it as a MORAL ACTION. He doth not threaten fearful judgments, but prayed for His enemies; there was no stain of passion and revenge upon His sufferings (1 Peter ii. 21). One great use of Christ's death was to give us lessons of meekness and patience and humble suffering. In this act there is an excellent lesson. Let us look upon the necessary circumstances that serve to set it off—(1) For whom He prays; (2) When He prays; (3) Why He prays; (4) In what manner. Information: 1. It informeth us that the love of Christ is greater than we can think or understand, much less express. 2. That all sins, even the greatest, except that against the Holy Ghost, are pardonable. 3. That remission of sins is the free gift of God, and the fruit of His pity and grace. Christ asketh it of His Father. 4. That pardon of sins is a special benefit. Christ asked no more than, "Father, forgive them." It is a special benefit, because it freeth us from the greatest evil, wrath to come (1 Thes. i. 10). And it maketh us capable of the greatest blessing, eternal life (Titus iii. 7). 5. That love of enemies, and those that have wronged us, is an high grace, and recommended to us by Christ's own example. Sure it is needful that we should learn this lesson, to be like God (Luke vi. 36). 6. Reproof of those that are cruel and revengeful. How different are they from Christ who are all for unkindness and revenge, and solicit vengeance against God's suffering servants with eager aggravations! Oh, how can these men look upon Christ's practice without shame! How can they look upon these prodigies of love and grace, and not blush! II. The next consideration of this prayer of Christ is as a TASTE AND PLEDGE OF HIS MEDIATION AND INTERCESSION. So it is prophesied: "He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. liii. 12). 1. It is an instance of Christ's love and bowels to sinners; He loved mankind so well that He prayed for them that crucified Him. Look on the Lord Jesus as praying and dying for enemies, and improve it as a ground of confidence. 2. See what is the voice and merit of His sufferings, "Father, forgive them." This is the speech that Christ uttered when He was laid on the cross. Abel's blood was clamorous in the ears of God (Gen. iv. 10). Christ's blood hath another voice, it speaketh to God to pacify His wrath, and to pardon us, if penitent and believing sinners; it speaketh to conscience to be quiet, God hath found out a ransom. 3. In the mediatory consideration it hinteth the coupling of His intercession with His satisfaction. On the cross, there He dieth and there He prayeth; He was both priest and sacrifice. 4. This is a pledge of His constant intercession in heaven. 5. It shows the nature

of His intercession. 6. The success of Christ's intercession, "Father, forgive them." Was He heard in this? Yes; this prayer converts the centurion, and those above "three thousand" (Acts ii. 41), and presently after five thousand more (Acts iv. 4). In the compass of a few days above eight thousand of His enemies were converted. Christ is good at interceding; His prayers are always heard (John xi. 42). II. I come now to the argument used, "They know not what they do." (*T. Manton, D.D.*) *A prayer for ignorant sinners*:—I. THAT IGNORANCE IS THE USUAL CAUSE OF ENMITY TO CHRIST. "These things" (saith the Lord) "will they do, because they have not known the Father, nor Me" (John xvi. 3). 1. What was their ignorance, who crucified Christ? Ignorance is two-fold, simple or respective. Simple ignorance is not supposable in these persons, for in many things they were a knowing people. But it was a respective particular ignorance, "Blindness in part is happened to Israel" (Rom. xi. 25). They knew many other truths, but did not know Jesus Christ. In that their eyes were held. Though they had the Scriptures among them, they misunderstood them, and did not rightly measure Christ by that right rule. (1) They supposed Christ to arise out of Galilee, whereas He was of Bethlehem, though much conversant in the parts of Galilee. And (2) they thought, because they could find no prophet had arisen out of Galilee, therefore none should. Another mistake that blinded them about Christ, was from their conceit that Christ should not die, but live for ever (John xii. 34). Thus were they blinded about the person of Christ, by misinterpretations of Scripture-prophecies. 2. Another thing occasioning their mistake of Christ, was the outward meanness and despicableness of His condition. 3. Add to this, their implicit faith in the learned rabbies and doctors, who utterly misled them in this matter, and greatly prejudiced them against Christ. Let us see, in the next place, how this disposed them to such enmity against Christ. And this it doth three ways. (1) Ignorance disposes men to enmity and opposition to Christ, by removing those hindrances that would otherwise keep them from it. As checks and rebukes of conscience, by which they are restrained from evil; but conscience binding and reproving in the authority and virtue of the law of God; where that law is not known, there can be no reproofs, and therefore we truly say, that ignorance is virtually every sin. (2) Ignorance enslaves and subjects the soul to the lusts of Satan, he is "the ruler of the darkness of this world" (Eph. vi. 12). There is no work so base and vile, but an ignorant man will undertake it. (3) Nay, which is more, if a man be ignorant of Christ, His truths, or people, he will not only oppose, and persecute, but he will also do it conscientiously, i.e., he will look upon it as his duty so to do (John xvi. 3). 1. How falsely is the gospel charged as the cause of discord and trouble in the world. It is not light, but darkness, that makes men fierce and cruel. As light increases, so doth peace (Isa. xi. 6, 9). 2. How dreadful is it to oppose Christ and His truths knowingly, and with open eyes? Christ pleads their ignorance as an argument to procure their pardon. 3. What an awful majesty sits upon the brow of holiness, that few dare to oppose it that see it! 4. The enemies of Christ are objects of pity. Alas, they are blind, and know not what they do. 5. How needful is it before we engage ourselves against any person or way, to be well satisfied and resolved that it is a wicked person or practice that we oppose. II. THAT THERE IS FORGIVENESS WITH GOD FOR SUCH AS OPPOSE CHRIST OUT OF IGNORANCE. I have two things here to do: 1. To open the nature of the forgiveness, and show you what it is. 2. To evince the possibility of it, for such as mistakingly oppose Christ. For—1. Forgiveness is God's gracious discharge of a believing penitent sinner from the guilt of all his sin, for Christ's sake. 2. Now, to evince the possibility of forgiveness for such as ignorantly oppose Christ, let these things be weighed. (1) Why should any poor soul, that is now humbled for its enmity to Christ in the days of ignorance, question the possibility of forgiveness, when this effect doth not exceed the power of the cause; nay, when there is more efficacy in the blood of Christ, the meritorious cause, than is in this effect of it? (2) And as this sin exceeds not the power of the meritorious cause of forgiveness, so neither is it anywhere excluded from pardon by any word of God. III. THAT TO FORGIVE ENEMIES, AND BEG FORGIVENESS FOR THEM, IS THE TRUE CHARACTER AND PROPERTY OF THE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT. 1. Let us inquire what this Christian forgiveness is. And that the nature of it may the better appear, I shall show you both what it is not and what it is. (1) It consists not in a stoical insensibility of wrongs and injuries. (2) Christian forgiveness is not a politic concealment of our wrath and revenge because it will be a reproach to discover it, or because we want opportunity to vent it. This is carnal policy, not Christian meekness. (3) Nor is it that moral virtue for which

we are beholden to an easier and better nature and the help of moral rules and documents. (4) Christian forgiveness is not an injurious giving up of our rights and properties to the lusts of every one that hath a mind to invade them. But, then, positively, it is a Christian lenity or gentleness of mind, not retaining, but freely passing by the injuries done to us, in obedience to the command of God. This is forgiveness in a Christian sense. 2. And this is excellent, and singularly becoming the profession of Christ, is evident, inasmuch as this speaks your religion excellent that can mould your hearts into that heavenly frame to which they are so averse, yea, contrarily disposed by nature. Inference 1. Hence we clearly infer that Christian religion, exalted in its power, is the greatest friend to the peace and tranquillity of states and kingdoms. 2. How dangerous a thing is it to abuse and wrong meek and forgiving Christians? 3. Let us imitate our pattern Christ, and labour for meek forgiving spirits. I shall only propose two inducements to it—the honour of Christ, and your own peace: two dear things indeed to a Christian. (*J. Flavel.*) *The first cry from the cross*:—I. Let us look at this very wonderful text as ILLUSTRATIVE OF OUR LORD'S INTERCESSION. 1. The first point in which we may see the character of His intercession is this—it is most gracious. Those for whom our Lord prayed, according to the text, did not deserve His prayer. 2. A second quality of His intercession is this—its careful spirit. You notice in the prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," our Saviour did, as it were, look His enemies through and through to find something in them that He could urge in their favour; but He could see nothing until His wisely affectionate eye lit upon their ignorance: "they know not what they do." 3. We must next note its earnestness. 4. It is interesting to note, in the fourth place, that the prayer here offered helps us to judge of His intercession in heaven as to its continuance, perseverance, and perpetuity. 5. Think yet again, this prayer of our Lord on earth is like His prayer in heaven, because of its wisdom. He seeks the best thing, and that which His clients most need, "Father, forgive them." That was the great point in hand; they wanted most of all there and then forgiveness from God. 6. Once more, this memorable prayer of our crucified Lord was like to His universal intercession in the matter of its prevalence. II. The text is INSTRUCTIVE OF THE CHURCH'S WORK. As Christ was, so His Church is to be in this world. 1. Christ's prayer on the cross was altogether an unselfish one. He does not remember Himself in it. Such ought to be the Church's life-prayer, the Church's active interposition on the behalf of sinners. She ought to live never for her ministers or for herself, but ever for the lost sons of men. 2. Now the prayer of Christ had a great spirituality of aim. You notice that nothing is sought for these people but that which concerns their souls, "Father, forgive them." 3. Our Saviour's prayer teaches the Church that while her spirit should be unselfish, and her aim should be spiritual, the range of her mission is to be unlimited. 4. So, too, the Church should be earnest as Christ was; and if she be so, she will be quick to notice any ground of hope in those she deals with, quick to observe any plea that she may use with God for their salvation. 5. She must be hopeful too, and surely no Church ever had a more hopeful sphere than the Church of this present age. If ignorance be a plea with God, look on the heathen at this day—millions of them never heard Messiah's name. Forgive them, great God, indeed they know not what they do. III. A word, in conclusion, TO THE UNCONVERTED. Remember your ignorance does not excuse you, or else Christ would not say, "Forgive them"; they must be forgiven, even those that know not what they do, hence they are individually guilty; but still that ignorance of yours gives you just a little gleam of hope. "Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance." But there are some here for whom even Christ Himself could not pray this prayer, in the widest sense at any rate, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," for you have known what you did, and every sermon you hear, and especially every impression that is made upon your understanding and conscience by the gospel, adds to your responsibility, and takes away from you the excuse of not knowing what you do. You know that there is sin and God, and that you cannot serve both. You know that there are the pleasures of evil and the pleasures of heaven, and that you cannot have both. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Christ's forgiveness*:—This prayer included many. It included all who had any share in the mockery, and crucifixion, and death of Christ. It included the Roman governor, who had given authority to crucify Him; the Roman soldiers, whose duty it was to see the sentence carried out into execution; the Jewish priests and rulers, who cried out for judgment; the multitude, who were stirred up by their religious guides and rulers.

All these various classes were ignorant of the true nature of the deed which they were committing, but all were not equally ignorant. Some knew more than others; and according to their greater knowledge was their guilt, according to their ignorance was their personal share in the prayer offered at the cross. Not one of these knew altogether what he was doing, or how great was the sin in which he was taking part; and each of these individuals or groups of individuals has some one or many to correspond to them in our own day and amongst ourselves in this age. The cross is for ever the sign of the world's darkest crime: it reveals what is lying at the root of all sin; and it opens up the nature of that dread conflict which is ever going on between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of God. Christ's prayer to His Father is to be regarded in the further light of a declaration of forgiveness, and an assurance of it. Forgiveness is easier for God to give than for man to take. Forgiveness cannot be received by every one. If a man says he forgives me, I can only accept his word if I believe that I need his forgiveness—in other words, if I am conscious that I have offended him and done something wrong. If I am in my own mind sure that I have not injured him, I decline to place myself on the footing of a forgiven man. I put away his forgiveness, I refuse to take the benefit of it, and I stand towards him as one claiming to have as much right to forgive him as he to forgive me. And if we transfer this comparison from earth to heaven, and inquire into the forgiveness which comes from God, we shall find that the only channel through which we can receive it is by accepting forgiveness as men who have done wrong, and who know the wrong they have done, and have confessed it and hated it. There are many who have passed a long way through the journey of life before they find out what they have been doing. Youth has often to pass into age before a man truly says, "Remember not the sins of my youth"; the hour of anger has to pass away before a man hears the voice of conscience, "Doest thou well to be angry." Perhaps it is only to-day that we see yesterday's faults, and not until another year may we see the faults of this; the scales fall away from our eyes, and we marvel that follies which are now so plain were not observed by us; we wonder how it was possible for us to do what we did, and not see its true character all the while. Conscience does not arouse us, and it is often not until the voice of memory cries aloud that the soul of a man is awakened, and his past life looks to him as if he had been walking in his sleep. Is it not time for every one to bestir himself, and ask whether he knows what his present life and actions mean? But there is another turn which we may give to the words. We may accept them as expressing our own spirit and our own life. And until we have received them into our hearts as the law of our own being, we have failed to see their true beauty and power. As He was in the world, so are we in the world. (*A. Watson, D.D.*)

*Ignorance and forgiveness:—*What makes so wide a difference between Judas and those who carried out what Judas had begun? The answer is in the text: they knew not what they did. Doubtless they knew that He was innocent; but of His person, office, authority, they had no conception. Their ignorance did not wipe out their sin, but it did palliate it. It mitigated the awful blackness of the crime which they wrought. It brought it within the limits of Divine mercy.

I. OUR SINS OF IGNORANCE NEED PARDON. 1. In matters that concern the soul, much of our ignorance is simply the fruit of neglecting or despising information. 2. A vast amount of religious ignorance springs from a willingness to be misled. Let a book appear that controverts the clearly defined truths of evangelical belief. Let popular clamour lift its voice in wild hue and cry against creeds and dogmas. Multitudes of men are at once ready to fall in with such a drift, not because they have carefully satisfied their minds that the current is bearing them in the right direction, but because it is in accord with what they wish were true.

II. WHAT IS IT WHICH MEN DO NOT KNOW? There is an ignorance of our own doings which is absolutely marvellous. Visiting a factory not long ago I was shown a machine which produces a little article of commerce with an inconceivable rapidity. But the ingenious inventor had contrived an apparatus which registered every one produced. If it were a hundred in every minute, each one was noted by the contrivance that created it. But it is a strange fact that man, with all his powers of consciousness, keeps himself in utter ignorance of much that makes up his action. Our actions flow out from us into the great world so unheeded that they are forgotten as soon as done; as water through the parted marble lips of a statue which does duty as a fountain.

1. Men know not the origin of what they do. Has it never puzzled, while it saddened you, to talk with some friend in the last stages of consumption? The hectic flush is on his cheek. There is an unnatural lustre in his eye. His breathing

is short and hurried. A hollow cough continually interrupts his speech. But he tells you that he is perfectly well. Of course he sees these symptoms. He freely acknowledges that they are unfavourable. But then he is thankful that his lungs are wholly unaffected. It is the seat and origin of the disease of which he is ignorant. Precisely identical is the way in which many treat the whole question of sin. 2. Equally is it true that the vast majority of men know not the effects of what they do. How thoughtlessly we sin! We may not think when we scatter sparks into a powder magazine, but it is none the less dangerous to do so. (*Bishop Cheney.*) *Prayer for murderers:*—In 1831, when the cholera first broke out in Hungary, the Slavonic peasants of the north, were fully persuaded that they had been poisoned by the nobles, to get rid of them. They accordingly rose in revolt, and committed the most dreadful excesses. A gentleman who, up to that moment, had been very popular with the poorer classes, was seized by them, dragged from his house into the streets, and beaten for several hours, to make him confess where he had concealed the poison. Weary, at last, with inflicting blows, the frenzied mob carried him to a blacksmith's shop, and applied hot ploughshares to his feet. Exhausted with this excruciating torture, the innocent sufferer, finding all explanations and entreaties vain, fell back from weakness, apparently about to expire, when the dying prayer of his Lord and Saviour escaped his lips: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!" The savage fury of the peasantry was calmed in a moment, as if by a miracle; and convinced of the innocence of their victim, and the enormity of their crime, they fled in terror from the place. *And cast lots.*—*On gambling:*—Christ had been condemned to death, and His property was being disposed of. He had no real estate. He was born in a stranger's barn, and buried in a borrowed sepulchre. His personal property was of but little value. His coat was the only thing to come into consideration. His shoes had been worn out in the long journey for the world's redemption. Who shall have His coat? Some one says: "Let us toss up in a lottery and decide this matter." "I have it!" said one of the inhuman butchers. "I have it!" "Upon My vesture did they cast lots." And there, on that spot, were born all the lotteries the world has seen. On that spot of cruelty and shame and infamy there was born the Royal Havana lottery, in which some of you may have had tickets. There was born the famous New York lottery, which pretended to have over £144,400 worth of cash prizes. There was born the Topeka, Kansas, Laramie City, Wyoming Territory lotteries. There was born the Louisville lottery, with diamonds and pearls, and watches by the bushel. There was born the Georgia lottery, for the east and the west. There was born the Louisiana lottery, sanctioned by influential names. There was born the Kentucky lottery, for the city school of Frankfort. All the lotteries that have swindled the world were born there. Without any exception all of them moral outrages, whether sanctioned by legislative authority, or antagonized by it, and moral outrages though respectable people have sometimes damaged their property with them, and blistered their immortal souls for eternity. Under the curse of the lottery tens of thousands of people are losing their fortunes and losing their souls. What they call a "wheel of fortune" is a juggernaut crushing out the life of their immortal nature. In one of the insolvent courts of the country it was found that in one village £40,000 had been expended for lotteries. All the officers of the celebrated United States Bank which failed were found to have expended the embezzled moneys in lottery tickets. A man won £10,000 in a lottery. He sold his ticket for £8,500, and yet had not enough to pay charges against him for tickets. He owed the brokers £9,000. The editor of a newspaper writes: "My friend was blessed with £4,000 in a lottery, and from that time he began to go astray, and yesterday he asked of me ninnepence to pay for a night's lodging." A man won £4,000 in a lottery. Flattered by his success, he bought another ticket and won still more largely. Another ticket and still more largely. Then, being fairly started on the road to ruin, here and there a loss did not seem to agitate him, and he went on and on until the select men of the village pronounced him a vagabond and picked up his children from the street, half-starved and almost naked. A hard-working machinist won £400 in a lottery. He was thrilled with the success, disgusted with his hard work, opened a rum grocery, got debauched in morals, and was found dead at the foot of his rum casks. Oh, it would take a pen plucked from the wing of the destroying angel, and dipped in human blood, to describe this lottery business. A suicide was found having in his pocket a card of address showing he was boarding at a grog-shop. Beside that he had three lottery tickets and a leaf from Seneca's "Morals" in behalf of the righteousness of self-murder. After a lottery in England there were fifty suicides

of those who held unlucky numbers. There are people who have lottery tickets in their pockets—tickets which, if they have not wisdom enough to tear up or burn up, will be their admission tickets at the door of the lost world. The brazen gate will swing open and they will show their tickets, and they will go in, and they will go down. The wheel of their eternal fortune may turn very slowly, but they will find that the doom of those who reject the teachings of God and imperil their immortal souls is their only prize. (*Dr. Talmage.*) *What is gambling?*—Gambling is risking something more or less valuable with the idea of winning more than you hazard. Playing at cards is not gambling unless a stake be put up, while on the other hand a man may gamble without cards, without dice, without billiards, without ten-pin alley. It may not be bagatelle, it may not be billiards, it may not be any of the ordinary instruments of gambling, it may be a glass of wine. It may be a hundred shares in a prosperous railroad company. I do not care what the instruments of the game are, or what the stakes are that are put up—if you propose to get anything without paying for it in time, or skill, or money, unless you get it by inheritance, you get it either by theft or by gambling. A traveller said he travelled one thousand miles on Western waters, and at every waking moment, from the starting to the closing of his journey, he was in the presence of gambling. A man, if he is disposed to this vice, will find something to accommodate him; if not in the low restaurant behind the curtain, on the table covered with greasy cards, or in the steamboat cabin, where the bloated wretch with rings in his ears winks in an unsuspecting traveller, or in the elegant parlour, the polished drawing-room, the mirrored and pictured halls of wealth and beauty. This vice destroys through unhealthy stimulants. We all at times like excitements. There are a thousand voices within us that demand excitements. They are healthful, they are inspiring, they are God-given. The desire is for excitement; but look out for any kind of excitement which, after the gratification of the appetite, hurls the man back into destructive reactions. Then the excitement is wicked. Beware of an agitation which, like a rough musician, in order to call out the tune, plays so hard he breaks down the instrument. God never yet made a man strong enough to endure gambling excitements without damage. It is no surprise that many a man seated at the game has lost and then begun to sweep off imaginary gold from the table. He sat down sane. He rose a maniac. The keepers of gambling saloons school themselves into placidity. They are fat, and round, and rollicking, and obese; but those who go to play for the sake of winning are thin, and pale, and exhausted, and nervous, and sick, and have the heart-disease, and are liable any moment to drop down dead. That is the character of nine out of ten of the gamblers. You cannot be healthy and practise that vice. It is killing to all industry. Do you notice that, just as soon as a man gets that vice on him, he stops his work? Do you not know that this vice has dulled the saw of the carpenter, and cut the band of the factory-wheel, and sunk the cargo, and broken the teeth of the farmer's rake, and sent a strange lightning to the battery of the philosopher. What a dull thing is a plough to a farmer, when, in one night in the village restaurant, he can make or lose the price of a whole harvest! The whole theory of gambling is hostile to industry. Every other occupation yields something to the community. The street sweeper pays for what he gets by the cleanliness of the streets; the cat pays for what it eats by clearing the house of vermin; the fly pays for the sweets it extracts from the dregs of a cup by purifying the air and keeping back pestilence; but the gambler gives nothing. I recall that last sentence. He does make a return, but it is in the destruction of the man whom he fleeces, disgrace to his wife, ruin to his children, death to his soul. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 35-37. He saved others, let Him save Himself.—*God in sovereignty often selects as His instruments those who have no desire to be subordinate to His will:—*Some passengers on the ship's deck may be walking forward, and some walking aft, and some standing still; but all, and all alike, are borne onward to their destiny by the breath of heaven in the sails, and according to the will of the pilot who holds the helm in his hand. This world in space is like a ship on the sea. Of the teeming multitudes that crowd its surface, some intelligently and willingly walk in the way of God's commandments, others violently resist, and others cleave sluggishly to the dust like clods of the earth; but our Father is at the helm—he will make all subservient to His purpose. Every atom will be compelled to take its place and contribute its own share to the establishment of His kingdom and the redemption of His people. The sovereignty of God is a precious doctrine. Pro-

vidence is sweet to them that believe: "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." Apart from the meaning of their words, the scoffing of these scribes was overruled by God for the accomplishment of His own purpose. By their conduct they unconsciously fulfilled the prophecy of Scripture regarding the Messiah. This reviling constituted one of the marks by which those who waited for redemption in Israel should know the Redeemer when He came. "A root out of a dry ground: no form nor comeliness—no beauty that He should be desired: rejected and despised: they shall look on Him whom they have pierced." (*W. Arnot.*) *Himself He cannot save*:—The King's Son has offered Himself as hostage for certain subjects that were held in captivity by a foreign power. He has gone into their place, and they have on the faith of this transaction been set free. Precisely because they have been set free, He cannot now escape. He has saved others by the substitution of Himself in their stead, and therefore Himself He cannot save. In order to explain fully how Jesus, having saved others, could not also save Himself, we must refer to the history of redemption. Bear in mind that we live under a Divine administration that has been well ordered from the beginning. When an architect begins to lay the foundation of a building, he has the perfect plan already before his eye. Although it be only a man's covenant, it is not carried forward by fits and starts according to the changing circumstances of the times. The design is completed from the first, and its execution is carried forward, it may be from generation to generation, all in accordance with the first design. Much more certain and evident it is that God, who sees the end from the beginning, framed His plan at first, and conducts His administration from age to age according to that plan. The way of salvation for sinful men is not left uncertain, to be modified by the accidents of the day. The gospel does not take its character from passing events. It is, indeed, a transaction between the unchangeable God and erring man; but it takes its character from the Source whence it springs, and not from the objects to which it is directed. It partakes of the immutability of its Author: it has nothing in common with the caprice of men. It has come from heaven to earth, not to receive, but to give an impression. The sun's rays when they reach the earth meet with a various reception. At one time they are intercepted before they touch its surface by an intervening subordinate orb; at another time the earth itself keeps out the light from that side of it whereon we stand: at one place, even when the rays are permitted to reach us, they stir corruption into greater energy; at another time they paint the flowers and ripen the fruit, stimulating life and gilding the landscape with varied beauty. But whether they are kept at a distance or received, whether when received they make corruption more corrupt, or make beauty more beautiful, the sun's rays are ever the same; they remain true to their celestial character, and are never changed by the changing accidents of earth. They retain all the purity of the heaven they come from, and contract none of the defilement of the earth they come to. (*Ibid.*) *If Christ had saved Himself, man would have been left unsaved*:—A traveller in an Asiatic desert has spent his last bit of bread and his last drop of water. He has pursued his journey in hunger and thirst until his limbs have given way, and he has at length lain down on the ground to die. Already, as he looks on the hard dry sky, he sees the vultures swooping down, as if unwilling to wait till his breath go out. But a caravan of travellers with provisions and camels comes up. Hope revives in his fainting heart. They halt and look; but as the poor man cannot walk, they are unwilling to burden themselves, and coldly pass on. Now he is left to all the horrors of despair. They have saved themselves, but left him to die. A ship has caught fire at sea. The passengers and crew, shut up in one extremity of the burning ship, strain their eyes and sweep the horizon round for sight of help. At length, and just in time, a sail appears and bears down upon them. But the stranger, fearing fire, does not venture near, but puts about her helm, and soon is out of sight. The men in the burning ship are left to their fate. How dreadful their situation, when the selfish ship saved itself from danger, and left them to sink! Ah! what heart can conceive the misery of human kind, if the Son of God had saved Himself from suffering, and left a fallen world to the wrath of God! (*Ibid.*) *Refusing to save himself*:—A soldier on duty at the palace of the Emperor at St. Petersburg, which was burnt a few years ago, was stationed, and had been forgotten, in one suite of apartments that was in flames. A Greek priest was the last person to rush through the burning rooms, at the imminent risk of his life, to save a crucifix in a chapel, and, returning, he was hailed by the sentry, who must in a few instants more have been suffocated. "What do you want?" cried the

priest. "Save yourself, or you will be lost." "I can't leave," replied the sentry, "because I am unrelieved; but I called to you to give me your blessing before I die." The priest blessed him, and the soldier died at his post. *Happiness in saving others*:—One of the Russian emperors, Alexander, when hunting, and riding in front of his suite, heard a groan which arrested him; he reined in his horse, alighted, looked round, and found a man at the point of death. He bent over him, chafed his temples, and tried to excite him. A surgeon was called, but he said "He is dead." "Try what you can do," said the Emperor. "He is dead," replied the surgeon. "Try what you can do." At this second command, the surgeon tried some processes; and after a time a drop of blood appeared from a vein which had been opened; respiration was being restored. On seeing this the Emperor, with deep feeling, exclaimed, "This is the happiest day of my life; I have saved the life of a fellow-creature." If being thus useful in saving a man from death imparted such happiness to the Emperor, how much greater will our joy and satisfaction be if any of our efforts result in saving a soul from death. Let us try what we can do. There is the greatest encouragement for the largest faith, for Christ is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God through Him. *Saving others by sacrifice of self*:—The plague was making a desert of the city of Marseilles; death was everywhere. The physicians could do nothing. In one of their counsels it was decided that a corpse must be dissected; but it would be death to the operator. A celebrated physician of the number arose, and said, "I devote myself for the safety of my country. Before this numerous assembly, I swear in the name of humanity and religion, that to-morrow, at the break of day, I will dissect a corpse, and write down as I proceed what I observe." He immediately left the room, made his will, and spent the night in religious exercises. During the day a man had died in his house of the plague; and at daybreak on the following morning, the physician, whose name was Guyon, entered the room and critically made the necessary examinations, writing down all his surgical observations. He then left the room, threw the papers into a vase of vinegar, that they might not convey the disease to another, and retired to a convenient place, where he died in twelve hours. Before the battle of Hatcher's Run, a Christian soldier said to his comrade, "You are detailed to go to the front, while I am to remain with the baggage. Let us change places. I'll go front, you remain in camp." "What for?" said the comrade. "Because I am prepared to die, I think; but you are not." The exchange was made. The thought of the self-sacrifice of his friend, and his readiness for the exposure of life or the realities of death, led the unsaved soldier to repentance and a like preparation for life. A vessel had driven on the rocks in a storm, and was hopelessly lost. Another vessel had gone out in the blind desire to do something, but a long way off she stopped and watched. That was all, but it was not very much. The men, however, dared venture no further; it would be life for life, and they were not great enough for that. Nelson, the ship's lad, said, "Cap'n, I'm going to try and save those men." And the captain said, "Nelson, if you do, you'll be drowned." And Nelson replied—no nobler reply was ever given—"Cap'n, I'm not thinking of being drowned, I'm thinkin' of savin' those men." So he and a shipmate took the boat, and went to the wreck, and saved every man who was there. *Saving others*:—A few years ago a vessel was wrecked on the southwest coast of this country; and with these words I close. It became known to the hamlets and villages, the towns and districts, that this vessel was wrecked, that men were seen clinging to the rigging. The life-boat was launched, and away the men went, and were a long while at sea. Darkness set in, but the people on the coast lighted fires; they kindled great flames so that the sailors might be aided, that the life-boat might be guided on its return to shore. After awhile they saw it returning, and a great strong man, of the name of John Holden, who was on the coast, cried aloud, as with a trumpet, to the Captain of the life-boat, "Hi! hi! have you saved the men?" The Captain answered, "Ay, ay, I have saved the men," and all hearts were filled with gladness. But when the boat reached the coast it was found that one man was left clinging to the mast. "Why did not you save him?" said Holden; "why did not you save him?" "Because we were exhausted," said the Captain, "and we thought it better to attempt to get safely to shore for those we had rescued and for ourselves. We should all have perished if we had remained another five minutes attempting to save one man." "But you will go back—you will go back to the rescue?" They said no, they had not the strength, the storm was so fierce. Holden threw himself on the shingle, and lifted up a prayer to God louder than the storm that God would put it into the hearts of some of those people

to go to the rescue of this one man, just as Jesus Christ came to rescue one lost world. When he had ceased praying six men volunteered to accompany him, and John Holden, with six men, were prepared to go and rescue that one man. If seven men will go to the rescue of one man, how many men shall we send to save Africa? These men were preparing to start when the good old mother of John Holden came rushing down, and threw her arms around his neck, and said, "John, you must not go. What can I do if you perish? You know your father was drowned at sea, and it is just two years since your brother William left; we have never heard a word of him since. No doubt he, too, has perished. John, what shall I do if you perish?" John said, "Mother, God has put it in my heart to go, and if I perish He will take care of you." And away he went; and after awhile the life-boat returned, and when he neared the coast a loud voice was raised, "Hi! hi! John, have you saved the man?" John answered in a trumpet voice, "Yes, we have saved the man; and tell my mother it is my brother William we have saved." Now, there is your brother man the wide world over; haste to the rescue even if you perish in the attempt. (*J. S. Balmer.*) *Self-sacrificing love*:—The helmsman who stood at the wheel in the burning steamer till he brought her to the shore, and then dropped backed into the flames, conscious that he had saved the passengers; the soldier who, to save his fugitive comrades, blew up the bridge over which they had crossed, though he knew that he himself would be blown up with the bridge; the Arab, dying of thirst in the desert, yet giving his last drop of water to his faithful camel, may be cited as types of Christ in his self-sacrificing love. Not many years ago there was a colliery accident in the north of England. The mine was flooded, and there were still some of the miners imprisoned below. Rescue parties were made up and sent down. It was a hard piece of work, and they had to work in relays. One man, however, it was noticed, kept working all the time. Others told him that he would kill himself, and asked him to stop and rest. But he answered: "How can I stop? There are some of my own down there." Is it not in some such way that Christ came down to seek His own on earth, and to give His life for them? (*Sunday School Times.*)

Ver. 38. A superscription also was written over Him.—*The superscription affixed to the cross of Christ*:—It was the custom of the Romans, that the equity of their proceedings might more clearly appear when they crucified any man, to publish the cause of his death in a table written in capital letters, and placed over the head of the crucified. And that there might be, at least, a show and face of justice in Christ's death, He also shall have His title or superscription. The worst and most unrighteous actions labour to cover and shroud themselves under pretensions of equity. Sin is so shameful a thing that it cares not to own its name. Christ shall have a table written for Him also. 1. The character or description of Christ contained in that writing: "The King of the Jews." 2. The person who drew His character or title. Pilate, who was His judge, becomes now His herald to proclaim His glory. 3. The time when this honour was done Him. When at the lowest ebb; amid shame and reproach. I. THE NATURE AND QUALITY OF CHRIST'S TITLE OR INSCRIPTION. 1. An extraordinary title. Instead of proclaiming Christ's crime, it vindicates His innocence. 2. Public. Written in three languages. 3. Honourable. Thus the cross became a throne of majesty. 4. A vindicating title. 5. A predicting and presaging title. 6. An immutable title. II. WHAT HAND THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE HAD IN THIS BUSINESS. 1. In overruling the heart and hand of Pilate in the draught and style of it, and that contrary to his own inclination. 2. Herein the wisdom of Providence was gloriously displayed, in applying a present, proper, public remedy to the reproaches and blasphemies which Christ had then newly received in His name and honour. The superstitious Jews wound Him, and heathen Pilate prepares a plaster to heal Him: they reproach, he vindicates; they throw the dirt, he washes it off. Oh, the profound and inscrutable wisdom of Providence! 3. Moreover, Providence eminently appeared at this time, in keeping so timorous a person, a man of so base a spirit, that would not stick at anything to please the people, from receding or giving ground in the least to their importunities. 4. Herein also much of the wisdom of Providence appeared, in casting the ignominy of the death of Christ upon those very men who ought to bear it. Pilate was moved by Divine instinct at once to clear Christ and accuse them. 5. The Providence of God wonderfully discovered itself (as before was noted) in fixing this title to the cross of Christ, when there was so great a confluence of all sorts of people to take notice. Inference 1. Hence it follows that the Providence of our

God can and often doth overrule the counsels and actions of the worst of men to His own glory. He is never at a loss for means to promote and serve His own ends. 2. Hence likewise it follows, that the greatest services performed to Christ accidentally and undesignedly, shall never be accepted nor rewarded of God. Pilate did Christ an eminent piece of service. He did that for Christ that not one of His own disciples at that time durst do; and yet this service was not accepted of God, because he did it not designedly for His glory, but from the mere overrulings of Providence. 3. Would not Pilate recede from what he had written on Christ's behalf? How shameful a thing is it for Christians to retract what they have said or done on Christ's behalf? 4. Did Pilate affix such an honourable, vindicating title to the cross? Then the cross of Christ is a dignified cross. How did the martyrs glory in their sufferings for Christ? Calling their chains of iron, chains of gold; and their manacles, bracelets. I remember it is storied of Ludovicus Marsacus, a knight of France, that when he, with divers other Christians of an inferior rank and degree in the world, were condemned to die for religion, and the jailor had bound them with chains, but did not bind him, being a more honourable person than the rest, he was offended greatly by that omission, and said, "Why do you not honour me with a chain for Christ also, and create me a knight of that illustrious order?" 5. Did Pilate so stiffly assert and defend the honour of Christ? What doubt can then be made of the success of Christ's interest, and the prosperity of His cause, when the very enemies thereof are made to serve it? Rather than Christ shall want honour, Pilate, the man that condemned Him, shall do Him honour. And as it fared with His person, just so with His interest also. 6. Did Pilate vindicate Christ in drawing up such a title to be affixed to His cross, then hence it follows that God will, sooner or later, clear up the innocence and integrity of His people who commit their cause to Him. (*J. Flavel.*)

Vers. 39-43. And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him.—

The impenitent malefactor :—I. THIS MAN'S TREATMENT OF CHRIST suggests several things for our consideration. "He railed on Him." 1. What inhumanity. The suffering of Jesus ought surely to have moved his heart to pity. 2. The friendlessness of the majestic Sufferer touched him not. 3. His like condition to the Sufferer by his side touched no chord of sympathy in his breast. II. THE MALEFACTOR WAS AN UNBELIEVER. He had probably never seen Christ before. On this account he was less guilty than many at Calvary that day; and less guilty than thousands who hear the gospel to-day, but still reject Christ. According to light and privileges is our responsibility. But this robber had ground enough to warrant his belief in Christ. His companion had, yet he joined those who railed upon Jesus. III. CHRIST'S TREATMENT OF THE MALEFACTOR. Pitying silence. He will answer no man's prayer to prove His power. His word, His Church, the Christian, are the miracles that must testify to His power to save. (*G. E. Jones.*)

The impenitent thief :—I. HUMAN LIFE ENDING AN UTTER MORAL WRECK. II. HUMAN LIFE ENDING ON THE GALLOWS. III. HUMAN LIFE ENDING IN SIGHT OF THE CROSS. IV. HUMAN LIFE ENDING IN DESPAIR. (*The Lay Preacher.*) *The two malefactors* :—I. REFLECTIONS. Here we have a true picture of human nature as it appears amidst difficulties, and dangers, and sufferings, the appropriate fruits of sin. A care to avoid pain is universally prevalent, but a care to avoid sin is comparatively of rare occurrence. Of this conduct one of the malefactors crucified with Christ afforded a lamentable example. But the other, however bad he had previously been, however much hardened or debased, was brought to true repentance. There was an invisible energy touching his soul and melting it into contrition; the power of the cross of Christ was felt, and it proved the Redeemer to be great in sufferings. Yes, this criminal became humble, his heart believed, and his faith penetrated the veil of the incarnation, realizing what was concealed from an eye of sense, even a ground of hope for his guilty soul. II. APPLICATION. 1. Let us see the greatness and the glory of the Saviour's character. What power! what grace! what dominion over the invisible world! 2. The language of the text supplies a plain proof of the separate and happy existence of the spirits of just men after death. 3. The sufficiency of the sacrifice for sin made by the death of Christ, is illustrated by the case we have considered. He contemplated sinners, the chief of sinners, when he offered Himself to God. 4. What different effects may result amidst a sameness of circumstances and opportunities. Here were two of similar character, both exceedingly wicked, with death in immediate prospect; one becomes a penitent seeking his salvation, the other remains hardened in his sins. 5. The subject, sug-

gests the language of encouragement and of caution. (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *The two robbers* :—To defer the time of conversion, and as a pretext for persevering in the ways of sin, the worldly-minded flatter themselves with three principal delusions. 1. One delays his conversion because he imagines that a time of sickness and suffering will present a more favourable opportunity to think of it. He flatters himself that he will not be carried away by a violent or sudden death; that a long and slow malady, during the course of which he will have time to reflect, and to make an account of his ways, will permit him to prepare himself for the meeting with his God. But how does he know whether a malady, under the weight of which the very organism of the constitution sinks, will not oppress his senses, dull his spirit, take from his mind its energy, and paralyze his faculties? Who can be ignorant that, in such a case, nothing is more usual than hesitations, adjournments, and delays, seeing the man has accustomed himself to the deceitful hope of a recovery, sooner or later? 2. A second reason, as I said, for which the worldly-minded defer their conversion is, that they suppose that at the hour of death Providence will work miracles of salvation, other and more efficacious than those which they have been able to enjoy during their life; and that the most pressing invitations of grace, the most irresistible attractions of the Holy Spirit, the most powerful manifestations of Divine love will be afforded. Where has God promised such manifestations? Nowhere. But so be it; what does this prove? When the heart is hardened by a long course of sin, will it not resist the evidence of truths the best established, and facts the most palpable, even the most powerful miracles of salvation? 3. Lastly, impenitent sinners defer their conversion upon the pretext that, at the time when they shall see death to be near, love of the world will disappear from the heart, carnal passions will be extinguished, and the soul will open itself to the influence of the truths of the Word of Life. But if the experience of many centuries is not sufficient to attest that such a time has not upon the soul that regenerating power which is supposed; that, instead of detaching himself from the things of earth, the unregenerated man will strive to attach himself more, and to cling more strongly, to measures which may prolong his existence in this world; that so far from becoming more susceptible to the beauty of truth and love, a long course of resistance renders the heart incapable of feeling their attractions, surely the example of the dying robber will be sufficient to dispel for ever those fatal delusions. Not only is this robber not touched by the truth, but he repels it; not only does he continue to sleep in the security of sin, but he is incensed against the Word; and whilst shame and remorse should have closed his lips, he unites with the multitude to insult the Saviour of the world; and to all his other sins he adds an impudent irony against the Son of God; he crowns all his crimes by blasphemy. After that, will you still count, O all you who defer your conversion, on the changes that accompany death, as if they could miraculously break the chain of your sins, or promote your eternal salvation? Three things have struck us in the history of the unconverted robber: first, that death was not startling; second, that extraordinary succour of grace was not received; third, that he aggravated his condemnation and hardened himself in circumstances, which it seems should have ameliorated his state. The conversion of his companion in iniquity presents to us reflections of quite another nature. And can you doubt, that if in this moment some one had been able to bring down the converted thief from the cross, had been able to lavish upon him the succours of art, and, in the end, cicatrize his wounds: if one could have contrived to arrest the fever to which he was a prey, to give him the use of his members; to restore him to life; can you doubt that, such being his feelings, the remainder of his earthly existence would have been other than a noble demonstration of the power of the faith and love which lived in his soul? (*Dr. Grandpierre.*) *The crucified malefactors* :—I. Let us consider WHEREIN THESE TWO MALEFACTORS WERE ALIKE. 1. They were alike in respect to depravity of heart. 2. They were alike in respect to their knowledge of Christ. 3. They were alike in practice—both malefactors. 4. They were alike in condemnation. II. WHEN THEY BEGAN TO DIFFER. Apparently it was when the darkness began. And we can easily believe that such an unexpected and solemn miracle, on such an awful occasion, did make a deep impression upon the minds of all the spectators of the crucifixion of the Lord of glory, and more upon some than others. III. WHEREIN THEY EVENTUALLY AND FINALLY DIFFERED. Here it may be observed—1. That one realized the wrath of God abiding upon him, whilst the other did not. This poor, perishing criminal was thoroughly awakened from his long and habitual stupidity, and clearly saw his

dangerous condition; which is usually the first step to conversion. He might, however, have seen and felt such danger, and with his eyes open gone to destruction. But—2. His awakening was followed with conviction. He not only realized that he was exposed to everlasting misery, but was convinced, in his conscience, that he deserved it. 3. He renounced his enmity to God, and became cordially reconciled to His vindictive justice. 4. Having exercised true love, repentance, and submission towards God, he exercised a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the two malefactors began to differ while hanging on the cross; and they continue to differ as long as they lived, and will continue to differ as long as they exist. What has been said in this discourse may serve to throw light upon some important subjects which have been supposed to be dark and difficult to understand. 1. It appears from the conduct of the penitent malefactor, that the doctrine of unconditional submission is founded in fact. He really felt and expressed a cordial and unreserved submission to God, when he expected in a few moments to sink down into the pit of endless destruction. 2. It appears from the views and exercises of the penitent malefactor, that the doctrine of repentance before faith is founded in fact. 3. It appears from the views and feelings of the penitent malefactor, that the doctrine of instantaneous regeneration is founded in fact. 4. It appears from the conduct of God towards the two malefactors, that He acts as a Sovereign in renewing the hearts of men. 5. The conduct of the impenitent malefactor shows that no external means or motives are sufficient to awaken, convince, or convert any stupid sinner. 6. It appears from the fate of the impenitent malefactor, that impenitent sinners have no ground to rely upon the mere mercy of Christ in a dying hour. It is, therefore, presumption in any sinners to live in the hope of a death-bed repentances. 7. It appears from the conduct and the condition of the penitent malefactor, that sinners may be saved at the eleventh or last hour of life, if they really repent and believe in Christ. (N. Emmons, D.D.)

*Lessons from the three crosses on Calvary:—*I. THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH. 1. Death to the sinner—the death of the body, and afterwards the death of the soul in hell. 2. Death to the Saviour, who knew no sin, but bears our iniquities on the cross. 3. Death to the saint; for though on him the second and more awful death, the death of the soul, hath no power, yet he cannot escape the death of the body; for all saints since Abel have had to pass through the river Jordan, save two, Enoch and Elijah. God *must* be just; and nothing short of death is sin's just recompense. Oh that you would turn to Him whose "*gift* is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord!" II. Another lesson we learn from this solemn scene is, that THE UNCONVERTED GROW WORSE AND WORSE. Perhaps the lost thief was brought up by pious parents; most likely he was taught to kneel before God by his mother, and was led up to the temple, and heard the sweet music echo among its marble arches, when the worshippers sang God's praises. Often had he wondered, and perhaps wept, when hearing the history of Joseph, and Samuel, and Daniel. But, alas! he was led away by little and little, adding sin to sin, until sinning became a habit, and habit became confirmed and strengthened, till he walked openly with the ungodly, stood in the way of sinners, and at last sat down in the seat of the scorner; and though rebuked, remained hardened, and went down a doomed man to hell. You cannot indulge one sin without opening the door for others. The man who begins by walking in the downhill path of sin, goes on to running, until he falls headlong into hell. III. THERE ARE NONE TOO BAD TO BE FORGIVEN. Art thou a thief? As the thief on the cross was saved, so mayest thou; take heart, and cry to Jesus. Art thou a blasphemer? The blasphemer, Bunyan, was saved, and so mayest thou; take heart, and cry to Jesus. Art thou a harlot? The harlot, Mary, was saved, and so mayest thou; take heart, and cry to Jesus. Art thou a murderer? There may be some such here; for God knows there are not only murders that never saw the light, but "he that hateth his brother is a murderer." But oh! the murderer David was saved, and so mayest thou; take heart, and cry to Jesus. Saul of Tarsus, whose hands were dyed with the blood of Stephen, was washed with the blood of Jesus. I saw, not long since, lying on the bed of sickness and death, a poor outcast woman, whose spirit has since departed. She spoke to this effect to a dear friend of mine:—"I have been, not five, not ten, not fifteen, but twenty years living in open and loathsome sin; but I have found that Christ will cast out none—no, not the most hell-deserving sinner who cries to Him. And now I am dying; but I am happy, for 'the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth me from all sin.' And when I am gone let these words be written on my tombstone—"So foolish was I, and ignorant, I was

as a beast before Thee. Nevertheless I am continually with Thee; Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory." Oh, whoever you are, Christ can save you! IV. Learn, too, from Calvary, that WHEN A SINNER IS SAVED, IT IS BY FAITH IN JESUS. How can I prove to you the faith of the penitent thief? By his wonderful prayer. (*H. G. Guinness, B.A.*) **Dost not thou fear God?—The restraining principle:—**And what is this fear? This fear is a solemn dread of the creature in presence of the Creator. Well, then, with real thought on the Passion, why must we feel, as a prominent principle, a fear of God? 1. The Cross, my brothers, witnessed to two things—God's awful and necessary judgments on human sin. It must be so. God could not be God if it were otherwise. The atonement is nothing else but the fearful statement of Divine holiness in relation to sin. Our first clear intimations of God, it has been truly argued, are not conclusions from reasoning on final causes, or evidences from the harmonies of a material world. No; they are the voice of conscience, and the self-evident consistency of the moral law. It is always possible to conceive, so it has been wisely said, all sorts of changes in the structure of the material world, and we find no difficulty to the intellect, whatever may be said about the imagination in the revelation of its final transformation by fire—that unimagined and yet inevitable catastrophe. But one thing is impossible—we cannot conceive right being otherwise than right, and wrong than wrong; we cannot imagine created dissonances in the harmony of the moral law, and what is that but saying that there are eternal necessities in the being of our Creator? And if so, being good, His judgment must be severe, must be awful, on persistent sin. We say so in our saner moments, but how are we to *feel* the truth of our saying? The answer is—Calvary. 2. But this fear is also a serious apprehension of the dreadfulness of evil in itself. The Cross showed the intensity of the love of God, and, by the form of the revelation, was revealed His knowledge of our fearful danger. The genius of Michael Angelo made the Sibyls splendid on the ceiling of the Sistine from the magnificence of proportion quite as much as from the softness of colour. Proportion is the secret of lasting charm. It is holy fear that is the principle of proportion in the relation of the creature—the fallen creature—to his Creator. To see God in suffering is, by grace, to have a proportionate affection. By it we are restrained, by it we are awed and solemnized, by it we act as men should in the felt presence of their Maker, by it we learn, in fact, our proper place. (*Canon Knox Little.*) *The fear of God gives harmony to life:—*As the glow of a solemn sunrise gives to the tracts of impenetrable vapour a splendour which illumines and transforms, changing into awful beauty the cloud-folds of the slate-grey morning on the mountains, which were otherwise but the draperies of a sulking storm, so the fear of God gives harmony and colour to the more murky cloudlands of the inner life. It is, it is indeed, to each of us a distinct and necessary element in that solid and faithful perseverance to which, and to which alone, is promised the reward of victory. Amidst the mysteries and miseries of this lower life; amidst its simple joys, its unspeakable sorrows; amidst the delirium of ambition, the intoxication of pleasure, the heart-corroding of daily care, the numbing frosts of encroaching worldliness, the blinding mists of severe temptations, we may be—if we will to realize its meaning—we may be arrested by the spectacle of the Passion; and among its fruitful and tremendous lessons, it teaches restraint of the tempest of our lower desires, brings us some sense of the vast issues of eternity, and says to us in accents which we may hear above the surge of the surf and the breaking of the billows, "Look to your Representative; contemplate the dignity, the mystery of His sorrow; whether high in rank or among (what the world calls) the dregs of society, whether with great gifts or with few attainments, walk as a creature in presence of his Creator; have a care what you are doing; live as those who live, but who have to die, or those who now in time must soon feel the pressure of eternity. Child, child of such an awful, such a splendid sacrifice, fear God!" (*Ibid.*) **Nothing amiss.—The dying thief's testimony to our Lord:—**"Nothing amiss"—what does that mean, as used here? Literally, it means "nothing out of place"—unsuitable, unbecoming, improper. Does it mean, then, "He has not been guilty of crimes like ours—of robbery, violence, insurrection, murder"? With nothing of that sort was He ever charged; and none in the city, good or bad, could be a stranger to the one charge brought against Him; for the whole country, as well as the crowded streets of the metropolis, was full of it. He was dying under the charge of high treason against heaven—of blasphemy—of not only laying claim to royal honours, but making Himself equal with God. I take it,

therefore, that in saying, "This Man has done nothing amiss," his words must mean, "He has made no false claim: He said, 'I am the Christ,' but in that He did nothing amiss; 'I am the King of Israel,' but in that He did nothing amiss; He called Himself the Son of God, the Light of the world, the Rest of the weary, the Physician of the sick at heart, but in this He did nothing amiss." Not that I for a moment suppose that this penitent criminal had knowledge enough to say all this as I have said it; but I feel confident that he had gleams of it, and that I have not gone beyond the spirit of his testimony to the innocence of our Lord. Amidst the buzzings about this new kind of criminal—innocent, by universal consent, of all the ordinary crimes, yet charged with a crime never before laid to the charge of any—some account of the marvellous works ascribed to Him, and of the words of heavenly grace He was said to have uttered, might easily reach this man's ear; and just as the wind bloweth where it listeth, so that grace which is the Spirit's breath upon the soul might send what he heard like arrows into a softened breast—as not seldom it does even still. (D. Brown, D.D.)

Ver. 42. Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.—*The penitent robber's faith and prayer*:—I. HIS WONDERFUL FAITH. "When Thou comest into Thy kingdom." When Charles I. of England, or Maximilian, the brilliantly brief Mexican emperor, were about to suffer death, suppose such an expectation had been expressed to them! It would have been considered a sickly taunt. Not so this. II. HIS REMARKABLE REQUEST. "Remember me." "God is not unrighteous to forget" Christian labour of love, but here was a miserable culprit who had never done Jesus any good turn. Charles II. and Louis Napoleon rewarded friends of their exile, but how about this request? What could he expect to be remembered for? 1. As a penitent sinner. 2. As one who has trust in a perfect Saviour. (Charles M. Jones.) *The dying thief*:—I. THIS NARRATIVE PRESENTS FAITH TO US AS CONSISTING IN A FIRM AND TRUSTING PERSUASION THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST; THAT HE HAS POWER TO HELP; AND THAT THE HELP HE GIVES IS SPIRITUAL HELP. On one side of Christ was a believer, on the other an unbeliever. Both in their pain pleaded with their more august and noble fellow-Sufferer. What said the unbeliever? "If Thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us." Contrast with this the appeal which faith presents. It at once addresses Christ as Lord: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." The unbeliever refused to regard Jesus as the Christ, except on the condition of a temporal deliverance. Had Christ commanded the nails to loose their hold, and the cross to fall; had He healed the wounds and assuaged the pain; he might then in his turn have acknowledged Him as Lord. But the believer imposes no condition, he asks no proofs; but with the iron smarting in his flesh, and the death-pain thrilling through his frame, he finds a voice to call his Saviour by His rightful name. Mark, too, the confidence of the penitent in the power of God to save. You meet with no dubious "if"; the prayer he offers is simple in its trustfulness. "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." He saw the triumphal arches decked with bright garlands from the tree of life, and angels waiting with the regal diadem, for the King of glory to come in and take His crown. And mark, too, the spirituality of his faith. He knew that Christ had the power to save his body from the pangs of death; yet it was for no such boon as this he asked. He hankered not after what he was leaving in the past. He thought of that with shame, and shuddered to recall it. He wanted to forget it in the brightness of a future kingdom, whence sin is banished, and shame is barred from entering. He felt for his soul. His faith looked above and beyond; above, to God's right hand, and to the throne where angels worshipped, and the spirits of the just bowed down; and beyond, further than mortal gaze can soar, further than dwarfish time can reach, into the eternal ages. II. THIS NARRATIVE TEACHES US SOMETHING OF THE DIFFICULTIES OF FAITH. It has often to contend both against experience and example. If ever there was a time when there seemed to be a strong excuse for disbelief, it was at the time that this dying malefactor displayed his faith. Speaking humanly, was it likely that that should be the Christ? What had the prophets said concerning Him, centuries before His coming? They had tuned trumpet and harp and voice to loudest, sweetest sound to tell of the dignity of His person, and the glory of His reign. They had depicted in vivid hues the splendour of His conquests, and His royal majesty. And what have we here? The convicted malefactor of man's tribunal, the puppet of man's small authority, belying, as it seemed, His own high preten-

sions, by the very weakness which He shows, and swallowing, if we may so say, His asseverations of immortality by His obedience to such a death. What! *this* the Christ! This bleeding, groaning, expiring clay; is this the royal King, the heaven-sent Messiah? Is there any might to save within that pallid arm? Is there any light under that glazing eye to scare the king of terrors from his prey? These were the thoughts which made the Jews refuse belief, and pour derision upon Christ. These were the semblances, in spite of which the dying thief believed, and called his dying Master, "Lord." The conduct of others, as well as the condition or predicament of Christ, was against his faith. He knew that Jesus, while hanging on the cross, had heard the taunts of the rulers, the insults of the soldiery, and the ribald mockery of the common people. As yet, the sack-clothed veiling of the sun had not abashed them; the crimson blushing of the indignant sky had not rebuked them to forbear; the shuddering earthquake, and the gathering pall of night had not chid their railing tongues to silence. Amazing faith! This man believed when all others disbelieved. He worshipped when all the rest were mocking. He adored when all the universe seemed in arms.

III. But the narrative shows us, too, THE VICTORIES OF FAITH; AND WITH A GLANCE AT THESE WE CLOSE. The faith of the dying thief secured a favourable response from Christ; was afterwards verified by facts; and is now triumphant in heaven. What, think you, accounts for the difference between these two thieves? Why was the heart of one a thief's heart to the last, hard as the millstone, reviling Christ, and hissing forth his last breath in insult at the Sufferer, while that of the other softened into a heart of flesh, and surged with sympathy for the innocence of the expiring Lord? It was faith in Christ which made the difference; the faith which worketh by love, and is the condition of the new creature in Christ Jesus; this accounted for the change wrought upon the penitent, and it justified the sinner. His guilt was removed; his iniquities were pardoned. The moment that the Master said, "This day shalt thou be with Me in paradise," that moment he found peace with God, and felt the "great calm" deep in his soul. What recked he of the cross, the pain, the wounds? Here was a victory for his faith. Let yours gain equal conquests, and it shall lead you to a like inheritance. We spoke just now of the apparent unreasonableness of this man's faith. Let us here speak a word of its justification, and therefrom let reason learn to reserve her verdicts and her judgments till the time be ripe. Had those sage reasoners, who thought the Saviour dead because His clay was cold, waited but three short days, and then looked into His tomb, they would have seen the faith of the dying thief justified in the vacant vault, the empty shroud, and the unknotted bands. (4. *Mursell.*) *The dying robber saved*:—I. CONSIDER THE PREVIOUS CHARACTER

OF THIS MAN. 1. He was not a pagan, but a Jew—a believer in the true God. 2. A believer in future existence and retribution. 3. He had become a hardened wretch. II. NOTICE HIS TRUE REPENTANCE. This is evidenced—1. In his viewing sin in its relation to God. 2. In his acknowledgment of his own guilt. 3. In his reproving the conduct of the other robber, and his anxiety for his welfare. III. HIS STRONG FAITH. He believed—1. That Christ had a kingdom. 2. That He would hear requests. 3. That He would grant blessings. IV. HIS PRAYER. 1. Short; but a single sentence. 2. Humble; he only asked to be remembered. 3. Reliant. Remember all my past bad life; but remember, too, that I am dying trusting in Thy grace. 4. Earnest. The petition of an awakened sinner on the brink of eternity. 5. It included all he needed. V. CHRIST'S ANSWER. Conclusions: 1. If Christ heard prayer when passing through His awful suffering upon the cross, will He not hear now that He is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour? 2. The conversion of this man shows how quickly Christ can save. 3. Salvation is all of grace, and not of works or merit. 4. Christ can not only justify and give us a title to heaven in a short time; He can also quickly sanctify and make us "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." 5. One robber was taken and the other left. 6. This is the only case of death-bed conversion recorded in the Bible. (J. L. Campbell.) *Marks of an accepted faith*:—I. TRUE FAITH IS SELF-CONDEMNATORY; IT IS ROOTED AND

GROUNDING IN SINCERE REPENTANCE. If I merit not condemnation, I need no pardon; and until I discern distinctly and fully that I am guilty, and righteously condemned, I cannot feel my need of pardon; and not feeling my need of it, I cannot desire it. The thief hanging at the Saviour's side did feel his guilt. II. BUT HIS FAITH WAS ALSO UNHEESITATING, FULL, CONFIDING. He sees his guilt; he feels his peril; he thinks that he discerns in Jesus evidence of power to help him;

and at once and earnestly his suit is urged, "Lord, remember me." No conditions are proposed, no terms offered; he throws his hopes on the mere mercy of Him he styles Lord. And truly this is the genuine temper of true faith. III. HIS FAITH WAS FRANK AND OPEN. There is a noble ingenuousness in this appeal of the dying thief that is worthy of all admiration, and of all imitation too. He spake not to one courted, admired, and applauded, but to one despised, calumniated, condemned, and hanging beside Him on a cross. There is here discovered a matchless moral grandeur in this dying thief. IV. HIS FAITH WAS SPIRITUAL; IT LOOKED THROUGH AND OVER ALL MERE OUTWARD CIRCUMSTANCES. V. THE OBJECT PETITIONED FOR HAS RESPECT EXCLUSIVELY TO THE HIGHER INTERESTS OF A LIFE BEYOND THE GRAVE. (*W. T. Hamilton, D.D.*)

The penitent malefactor:—I. Notice in the dying thief the OPERATIONS OF GENUINE REPENTANCE. 1. He begins to rebuke the reviling malefactor. 2. He confesses his sin, and acknowledges the equity of his sentence. 3. He vindicates the character of Christ, while he unequivocally condemns himself. 4. His repentance is accompanied by faith in Christ. 5. And earnest prayer to Him. II. View THE CONDUCT OF OUR LORD TOWARDS HIM. 1. Though Christ would take no notice of a reviler, nor give any answer to the language of reproach, yet He would attend to the plea of mercy; and to the plea of one of the most unworthy, and the least likely to obtain it. He would hear the prayer of a perishing sinner whose heart was contrite, even in the hour of death. What condescension, and what love! 2. He answered him without delay. 3. As the petition had implied much, so did the answer. 4. The promise is pronounced with a solemn asseveration; "Verily, I say unto thee." This bears the form of an oath, and gives the fullest assurance for the performance of the promise (*Heb. vi. 18*). Reflections: 1. We may observe, that there is a great difference between the conduct of this dying malefactor, and that of many dying penitents who are supposed to be converted. They often speak confidently of their state, and of their going to heaven; but this poor man did not, though Christ said so of him. He prayed that he might be saved; and after what Christ said, he might believe that he should; but he himself said not a word of that. The strong language that was used was Christ's, and not his. 2. There is a request on Christ's part as well as on ours: He desires to be remembered by us (*1 Cor. xi. 24*). He does not need it as we do; but love desires it, and wishes to live in the mind of its objects. (*Theological Sketch-book.*) *The dying thief*:—1. The triumph of faith over great difficulties. 2. How Christ honours the exercise of faith. 3. How the favour of Christ abates the force of earthly trouble. 4. The way to the kingdom of glory is by a suffering Saviour. 5. Necessity gives life to prayer. (*J. S. Bright.*)

The penitent thief:—I. THE MARVELLOUS PETITION PRESENTED BY THE DYING PENITENT. 1. Marvellous, coming from such a petitioner. 2. Marvellous, being offered in such circumstances. 3. Marvellous, in the spirit it revealed. 4. Marvellous, in its substance and purport. II. THE YET MORE MARVELLOUS REPLY OF CHRIST. 1. The manner in which it was given excites our wonder; no delay or suspense, no conditions or qualifications. 2. When we look into the answer itself, we are amazed at its fulness, richness, and appropriateness. (1) The place in which the delightful meeting was to occur: "Paradise." (2) The society of which the dying penitent was assured: "With Me." (3) The immediacy of the happiness promised: "To-day." Suggestions: 1. A blessed prospect is, in this language of our Divine Lord, opened up before those who are looking forward to death as the step into life. 2. A suitable prayer is, in the language of the penitent, suggested to our hearts. 3. The narrative affords encouragement to those who have long sinned, but who now sincerely repent and earnestly desire salvation. (*J. R. Thomson, M.A.*) *The saved malefactor*:—I. HIS CHARACTER. A malefactor, a criminal of the basest sort, probably selected for crucifixion on this very account, to put greater shame upon Jesus. Then, none need despair. II. NO ONE HAS ANY RIGHT TO PRESUME. While this one is taken, the other is left. All do not repent at the eleventh hour. III. NO MAN HAS A RIGHT TO EXPECT SALVATION WITHOUT GIVING EVIDENCE OF FAITH AND REPENTANCE. In the case of the penitent thief, there was—1. A conviction of sin. 2. Faith in the Son of God. 3. Prayer. 4. Concern for others. 5. Testimony to Jesus. (*Canon Fremantle.*) *The penitent thief*:—I. THE EXAMPLE OF THE PENITENT THIEF IS ADAPTED TO EXCITE, EVEN IN GREAT OFFENDERS, A RELIANCE ON THE GOODNESS AND COMPASSION OF GOD, IF THEY WILL RETURN TO HIM AND TO THEIR DUTY. Here was a man who had committed a crime for which by his own confession he deserved to die. His faith, and the manner in which he showed it, were doubtless very commendable; and yet they seem to have been rather too

highly extolled. The behaviour of Christ under His sufferings, and the wonderful circumstances attending His crucifixion, might easily induce an unprejudiced man to think that He could be no ordinary person, much less a malefactor; and these things, joined to the knowledge which this man, being of the Jewish nation, might have had before of Christ and of His ministry, might well induce him to acknowledge Him for the Messiah. But then it is likewise to be considered that he ran no risk, as to his worldly concerns, in so doing; the world could not use him worse; and his miseries had placed him beyond earthly fear and hope, beyond the reach of malice and cruelty. To his repentance, then, is to be ascribed the gracious reception which he found; his repentance was sincere, and God was pleased to accept the will for the deed. For, since God is no respecter of persons, where the same dispositions are found, the same favour will be extended. The consequence thus far seems to be just. II. The second use of the text, which ought always to be joined with the first, is to DISSUADE MEN FROM HABITUAL VICE, AND A DELAY OF REFORMATION, BY SHOWING THEM HOW LITTLE REASON SUCH OFFENDERS HAVE TO EXPECT THAT THEY SHALL EVER SO QUALIFY THEMSELVES, AS TO BECOME FIT TO OBTAIN THE FAVOUR WHICH WAS EXTENDED TO THIS MAN. 1. To abuse and provoke the lenity and long-suffering of God in this manner, to be wicked because He is good, is monstrously base and perverse, and shows a very dangerous depravity. 2. Sin, if it be not resisted, grows daily upon us, and makes the return to righteousness more and more difficult and improbable; and he who cannot find in his heart to amend, even whilst he is a novice in iniquity, will be less disposed to it when time and custom have hardened him. 3. Sin is of a most infatuating nature, and corrupts not only the heart, but the understanding; and who knows where it may end? 4. As all other habits can no other way be removed than by introducing contrary habits, which is the work of patience, resolution, and repeated attempts; the same must hold true concerning sinful habits. So that though a change of mind and a purpose of amendment may be wrought soon and suddenly, yet a change of behaviour, which is the only sure proof of amendment, requires time and labour; and it is hard to conceive how a late repentance can change bad habits, unless we suppose that the alteration for the better, which is just beginning in this world, may be carried on and completed in the next. But concerning this the Scriptures are silent; and who would risk his soul upon conjectural hopes? 5. Since sinners have perhaps often designed and purposed, and resolved, without performing, they will have too much reason to suspect the sincerity of their own hearts, and to rely but little on a change of purpose which present and pressing danger extorts from them. Add to this, that a sinner may be removed out of this world suddenly and without any warning, or that many infirmities of body or mind may deprive him in a great measure of his understanding, and render him incapable of performing any rational act of any kind, and consequently the act of repenting. 6. The gospel requires from all men improvement and perseverance. A late repentance, such as it is, at the close of a bad life, can seldom exert the first of these duties, and never the second. 7. An intention to do just enough to save ourselves from perdition, and no more, is putting ourselves in a very dangerous situation. A cold and faint attempt to enter in must be attended with the hazard of being shut out. (*J. Jortin, D.D.*) *A sinner's repentance:*—The word repentance does not mean simple regret. It is a change of mind; an alteration of thought, feeling, and conduct. When a sinner truly repents he does more than lament the past, dread the future, and ask for mercy. He hates his sin, not only for the punishment it brings, but for itself. It is no longer in harmony with his taste. Holiness is no longer his aversion. However sudden may have been the dying thief's repentance, it was an entire change of heart and character, and would have resulted in an entire change of conduct had his life been prolonged. In proof of this, consider some of the elements of this repentance. I. There was REVERENCE FOR GOD. He said to his companion "Dost thou not fear God." The absence of this fear is the main characteristic of the ungodly. "There is no fear of God before their eyes." II. The dying thief indicated CONTRITION for his former life of sin. "We indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds." He was suffering the agonies of crucifixion. But the torture did not provoke him to complain of the severity of the sentence. He felt himself to be a criminal. He confessed it before his companion and the crowd. We infer from the entire narrative that he was a sincere penitent. He did honestly lament his wickedness. It was more than regret for the consequences; it was remorse for the sin. This is an element in all true repentance. III. In the repentance of the dying thief there was APPRECIATION OF GOODNESS. He said of Jesus, "But this man hath done

nothing amiss." False penitence, which laments only the discovery, the shame, the punishment of sin, and not sin itself, may regret the lack of virtues which bring rewards, but does not really appreciate and admire goodness for its own sake. It is otherwise with those who "unfeignedly repent." IV. This repentance included a CONFESSION OF CHRIST. The dying thief testified to all around his admiration of Christ's character. By what he had heard from others, by what he had himself witnessed, he felt assured that Jesus was innocent. And he did not hesitate to declare this. A faithful confession of Christ will always follow sincere repentance. But how much such confession involves! V. FAITH was illustriously manifested in this repentance. The dying thief said, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom." He called Jesus "Lord"—as possessing authority, a right to rule. He ascribed to Him kingship, for he spoke of His kingdom. This was wonderful. There was no outward indication of lordship, there were no insignia of royalty. Jesus was a captive, condemned, insulted, crucified; yet does the dying thief salute Him as a king! King? Where are His royal robes? They have torn from Him even His ordinary dress! King? Where is His throne? That cross of shame on which He hangs! Yet poor, vanquished, insulted, murdered, the dying thief has faith to recognize Him as a king, and able to confer royal gifts! VI. The repentance of the dying thief manifested itself in PRAYER. Where there is true repentance there will be true prayer. In every case of conversion it may be said, as was said of Saul of Tarsus, "Behold he prayeth." Such prayer will be humble, believing, and obedient. And our prayers will not be merely for benefits we are to receive passively, but for strength and opportunity to serve God actively. We shall regard it as the best of all benefits to be numbered with His subjects, to be employed as His servants, to be remembered in His kingdom. Can repentance, when it includes such a spirit of prayer, be a trifling change in one who has neglected prayer, disbelieved its efficacy, disliked its exercise? VII. The repentance of the dying thief already began to bring forth the good works of zeal for God and charity towards man. He honoured Christ before the world, and proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom. He also felt for the sad state of his companion in crime, and sought with his dying breath to lead him to repentance. However recent his own convictions he must make them known. He could not let his companion die impenitent without a word of remonstrance. He could not withhold the discovery he had made of a Saviour who could do more for them both than take them down from the cross. (*Newman Hall, LL.B.*) *The penitent robber*:—I like Luke's description of these two men better than any other. He does not call them thieves: he calls them malefactors—that is, doers of evil, without specifying the exact form of crime to which they had committed themselves, and which had brought upon them the agonies of crucifixion. I am quite willing that one of them should be called a thief: he was small and mean of mind, and there was nothing in his speech that did not become a very low and vulgar order of intellectual and moral conception. But the one who is usually spoken of as the penitent thief proved himself in this last distress to be one of the greatest men that ever lived in the world. If you analyze his speech you will find that in philosophy, in audacity of thought, in width and penetration of conception, no greater speech was ever made by human lips. I am, therefore, prepared to defend this malefactor on the intellectual side, and to redeem him from the debasement of his association with a man of a nutshell mind and of a foul tongue. This is one of the stories in the Bible that must be true, by the mere force of its audacity. It never could have entered the mind of a romancist that such a man, under such circumstances, could have made such a speech. All the disciples are mean men, intellectually, compared with this dying malefactor. They never discovered, up to the time of the crucifixion, intellectual vigour enough to conceive a figure like this. They have painted women well, they have done justly by a thousand beautiful incidents in the life of their great, sweet Lord, but no man like this have they ever dreamed into being. He was real—he did say these words. They stand out from all other words so grandly as to be their own best testimony and vindication. What did this dying malefactor do to prove his intellectual greatness? He saw the Lord in the victim. What did all the other minds round about him? What vulgarity always does and must do—reviled, derided, scorned the weak, defied the impotent, crushed the worm. It was like them, worthy of them; in so doing they did not debase Christ; they wrote themselves little men. It is a great thing for thee, poor coward, to revile a man both of whose hands are nailed, and whose feet are pierced with iron, and whose temples are bleeding because of the cruel thorn? Art thou very witty, mighty in mind, very chivalrous and nobly heroic to speak

derisive words of any man in such circumstances? Observe how all other men looked upon Christ just then. All the disciples had forsaken Him, and fled away. The women were standing in helpless tears, dejected and speechless. All the people round about, big and little, were mocking and deriding the great Sufferer. One of the malefactors was saying, "If Thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us." Little minds have all little scales of proof. If Jesus had come down from the cross and taken the two thieves with Him, that would have settled everything in the mind of the malefactor, but it would have only settled it for the moment. He would have taken from that wider liberty to repeat his petty felonies. He must be a thief, that man, and he would have made his calling and election sure. But in the midst of all this abandonment on the one hand, derision, contempt, and scorn on the other, an unexpected and unlikely voice says "Lord" to the dying Nazarene. It was a great thought, it was an audacious utterance. Viewed in relation to the time and all the convergent circumstances of the case, to have said "Lord" then was to have seen the sun amid the darkness of midnight, to have penetrated the gloom of countless generations and ages, and to have seen all the stars in their keenest glitter of light far away above the dense and lowering gloom. Dost thou see big things in the dark, my friend, or art thou terrified by thine own shadow? What mind hast thou? A forecasting and prophetic mind, a seeing mind, a prophetic brain; or art thou dazed by lights that seem to have no relation and harmony, and confounded by voices coming from a thousand different quarters at once? Hast thou shaping power of mind, a grand power, all but creative, which orders chaos into Cosmos, which makes the darkness reveal its jewellery of stars? Where are thou in this great religious thinking? Learn from a strange teacher that Victim and Lord are compatible terms. Learn that a man may transiently be at the very depth of his history, that he may come up from that with a completer strength and a fuller lustre to the height of his power. "He made Himself of no reputation; He took upon Him the form of a servant; He became obedient unto death." Dost thou only know a king when he is upon a throne? Dost thou require a great label in red letters to be put around a man's neck to know just what he is? Dost thou know no man can be a great man who lives in a little house? Sayest thou of thy small vulgarized mind, "The man who lives amid all these bricks must be a huge man"? Dost thou never see a third-class passenger in a first-class carriage? What sort of mind hast thou? O that the Lord God of Elijah and Elisha would open thine eyes, poor servant, to see within the thronging soldier-host a circle of angels, keen as lightning, terrible as fire, defensive as almightiness! This malefactor, a man who could have played with thrones and nations, did more than see the Lord in the victim, and yet it was something exactly on the same line of thought. He saw life beyond death. Consider where he is: on the cross, bleeding, his life oozing out of him in red drops; his breath will presently be gone. Is he throttled, killed?—is he a beast thrust through that will baptize the earth with red water, and exhale and blend with the infinite azure? He is not conquered; he dies to live. "Lord," said he, "remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." "But you are dying."—"No." "You are to be buried."—"No." "It is your last hour."—"No. I cannot die: if this Man take me in charge, death will be but a momentary shadow. I will come up into a larger life. This Man breathes eternity, and creates kingdoms, and sets up empires, and gives away thrones. I cannot die if He take charge of me." Whoever made so grand a speech in circumstances so unlikely to have suggested such an outcome? What is your speech? A sad farewell—something little better than a whine—the whimper of a subdued nature—the tremulous breath of one whose strength is all gone? Or dost thou languish into life? Dost thou hear the angels singing, "Sister spirit, come away"? What is thy faith doing for thee? Be not shamed by a malefactor. The dying malefactor spoke up for Christ. Into what strange circumstances we are often drawn—our friends gone or dumb, our enemies deriding and mocking, and our defence spoken by a strange tongue! We are better known than we think for; all our help comes from unexpected quarters. The true man is not utterly deserted: some one will arise from a corner unthought of to speak a kind word for him. The malefactor said, "This Man hath done nothing amiss." It was a bold thing to say: the court had condemned Him, the High Priest had reviled Him, the sentiment of the times was against Him, the mob had hustled Him to Golgotha; and the malefactor undertook from that high court to reverse the decree, and to pronounce the Son of God to be unworthy of such a death! We have our chances of speaking for Christ—how do we use them? He is still upon the cross—who speaks for Him?

I have heard men speak for Christ whose way of doing it I have envied, and who were the very last men in the world, I thought, who could ever have spoken up for such a Lord. They have spoken with the pathos of gratitude; they have spoken with the directness of a burning and earnest conviction. Were they ministers in the usual sense of the term? No, but they were ordained prophets of God. We can be exemplars where we cannot be advocates: we can live a life where we cannot make a speech: every man amongst us can do something to proclaim, not the innocence only, but the infinite and incorruptible holiness of Jesus Christ. This malefactor saw the kingdom beyond the cross. Great man—piercing mind—audacious thinker. Is there a man here of such spirit and temper? It is not in man; it is a revelation of the Holy Ghost. God opens strange mouths to speak His truth. Just see, then, how our selfishness differs. The little thief said, "Save me, take me down from the cross," the big thief said, "Never mind the present: let it be a kingdom when it comes—an ulterior salvation, an ulterior destiny." Selfishness indeed, but on a nobler scale. The small mind wanted an immediate benefit; the great mind said, "Let us go through this tunnel into the great kingdom, into the beautiful landscape. When we shoot out of this darkness—Lord, remember me!" Perhaps not selfish either. Did not this dying malefactor say more in that interview with Christ than some of us have ever said in our lives? He defended Him, he hailed Him Lord, he ascribed to Him a kingdom, he triumphed over death, he saw the crown above the cross. Christianity invites and encourages vigour of intellect. (*J. Parker, D.D.*) *The dying thief*:—I. We see here an illustration of THE CROSS IN ITS POWER OF DRAWING MEN TO ITSELF. It is strange to think that, perhaps, at that moment the only human being that thoroughly believed in Christ was that dying robber. The disciples are all gone. The most faithful of them are recreant, denying, fleeing. Brethren, it is just the history of the gospel wherever it goes. It is its history now, and in this congregation. The gospel is preached equally to every man. The same message comes to us all, offering us the same terms. And what is the consequence? A parting of the whole mass of us, some on one side and some on the other. As when you take a magnet, and hold it to an indiscriminate heap of metal filings, it will gather out all the iron, and leave behind all the rest! "I, if I be lifted up," said He, "will draw all men unto Me." The attractive power will go out over the whole race of His brethren; but from some there will be no response. In some hearts there will be no yielding to the attraction. Some will remain rooted, obstinate, steadfast in their place; and to some the lightest word will be mighty enough to stir all the slumbering pulses of their sin-ridden hearts, and to bring them, broken and penitent, for mercy to His feet. To the one He is "a savour of life unto life, and to the other a savour of death unto death." And now, there is another consideration. If we look at this man, this penitent thief, and contrast him, his previous history, and his present feelings, with the people that stood around, and rejected and scoffed, we get some light as to the sort of thing that unfits men for perceiving and accepting the gospel when it is offered to them. Why was it that scribes and Pharisees turned away from Him? For three reasons. Because of their pride of wisdom. "We are the men who know all about Moses and the traditions of the elders; we judge this new phenomenon not by the question, How does it come to our consciences, and how does it appeal to our hearts? but we judge it by the question, How does it fit our rabbinical learning? They turned away from the cross, and their hatred darkened into derision, and their menaces ended in a crucifixion, not merely because of a pride of wisdom, but because of a complacent self-righteousness that knew nothing of the fact of sin, that never had learned to believe itself to be full of evil, that had got so wrapped up in ceremonies as to have lost the life; that had degraded the Divine law of God, with all its lightning splendours, and awful power, into a matter of "mint and anise and cummin." They turned away for a third reason. Religion had become to them a mere set of traditional dogmas, to think accurately or to reason clearly about which was all that was needful. Still it is not sin in its outward forms that makes the worst impediment between a man and the cross, but it is sin plus self-righteousness which makes the insurmountable obstacle to all faith and repentance. And then we see here, too, the elements of which acceptable faith consists. Mark what it was that he believed and expressed—I am a sinful man; all punishment that comes down upon me is richly deserved: This man is pure and righteous; "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom!" That is all—that is all. That is the thing that saves a man. How much He did know—whether he knew all the depth of what he was saying, when he said,

"Lord!" is a question that we cannot answer; whether he understood what the "kingdom" was that he was expecting, is a question that we cannot solve; but this is clear—the intellectual part of faith may be dark and doubtful, but the moral and emotional part of it is manifest and plain. "My Saviour! My Saviour! He is righteous: He has died—He lives! I will stay no longer; I will cast myself upon Him!" II. This incident reminds us not only of the attractive power of the cross, but of the prophetic power of the cross. We have here THE CROSS AS POINTING TO AND FORETELLING THE KINGDOM. Pointing out, and foretelling: that is to say, of course, and only, if we accept the scriptural statement of what these sufferings were, the Person that endured them, and the meaning of their being endured. But the only thing I would dwell upon here, is, that when we think of Christ as dying for us, we are never to separate it from that other solemn and future coming of which this poor robber catches a glimpse. The crown of thorns proclaims a sovereignty founded on sufferings. The sceptre of feeble reed speaks of power wielded in gentleness. The cross leads to the crown. He who was lifted up to the cross, was, by that very act, lifted up to be a Ruler and Commander to the peoples. "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness before Him in the day of judgment." "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." III. Here is the cross AS REVEALING AND OPENING THE TRUE PARADISE. "This day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." It is of more practical worth to note: the penitent's vague prayer is answered, and over-answered. Remember thee! thou shalt be with Me, close to My side. Remember thee *when I come!* *this day* shalt thou be with Me. And what a contrast that is!—the conscious blessedness rushing in close upon the heels of the momentary darkness of death. At the one moment there hangs the thief writhing in mortal agony; the wild shouts of the fierce mob at his feet are growing faint upon his ear: the city spread out at his feet, and all the familiar sights of earth are growing dim to his filmy eye. The soldier's spear comes, the legs are broken, and in an instant there hangs a relaxed corpse; and the spirit, the spirit—is where? Ah! how far away; released from all its sin and its sore agony, struggling up at once into such strange divine enlargement, a new star swimming into the firmament of heaven, a new face before the throne of God, another sinner redeemed from earth! (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*)

The penitent malefactor:—I. THE CHARACTER AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF THIS MAN. The Evangelists St. Matthew and St. Mark describe him as a "thief"; and in the text St. Luke denominates him a "malefactor." It may not, therefore, be improper to trace the progress of iniquity in such persons; and to show the causes which contribute to form their mischievous and wretched characters. By this means inexperienced persons may be warned against the beginnings of evil, and the guardians of youth reminded of the responsibilities under which they lie. Among these causes we may specify—1. The want of a sound religious and moral education. 2. The violation of the Sabbath is another fruitful source of evil. 3. The keeping of bad company, which is another frightful source of evil. 4. Habits of intemperance. The circumstances of the man who is described in our text were awful indeed. His end was actually come. Even to the holiest of men death is an affair of awful moment. It dissolves our earthly frame; it severs our connection with every person and object beneath the sun; it ends our short day of trial; and it forces us into a state which eternity will never reverse. The fear and trepidation which naturally arise, even in a good mind, at the arrival of death, are terribly heightened by that consciousness of guilt which the malefactor before us must have felt. II. HIS CONDUCT UPON THIS MOMENTOUS OCCASION. 1. He reproved the rashness and impiety of his impetuous fellow-sufferer. 2. He acknowledged the justice of the sentence under which he lay. "We indeed," said he, suffer death "justly." It is an ill sign when persons who are punished for their faults are loud in their complaints of undue severity. 3. He bore witness to the innocence of Jesus. "This man," said he, "hath done nothing amiss." 4. He made a direct application to Christ for mercy. Turning his languid eyes to Jesus, he said, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." III. THE ANSWER WHICH CHRIST GRACIOUSLY VOUCHSAFED: "Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." 1. This answer secured to the man the requisite preparation for future glory. If he was to be in paradise that day, he must on that day be qualified for its joys and employment. That this great work should be instantaneously wrought is not at all surprising when we consider its Author. 2. The answer of our Lord marks the true nature of man. 3. Our Lord's answer teaches us that those who die in Him immediately enter into rest. No longer period of

time elapses after the believing soul has left the body before its superior happiness begins. (*J. Jackson.*) *Folly of trusting to a death-bed repentance* :—Do not trust a death-bed repentance, my brother. I have stood by many a death-bed, and few indeed have there been where I could have believed that the man was in a condition physically (to say nothing of anything else) clearly to see and grasp the message of the gospel. I know that God's mercy is boundless. I know that a man, going—swept down that great Niagara—if, before his little skiff tilts over into the awful rapids, he can make one great bound with all his strength, and reach the solid ground—I know he may be saved. It is an awful risk to run. A moment's miscalculation, and skiff and voyager alike are whelming in the green chaos below, and come up mangled into nothing, far away down yonder upon the white turbulent foam. "One was saved upon the cross," as the old divines used to tell us, "that none might despair; and only one that none might presume." (*Maclaren.*) *A wonderful prayer* :—What if the two greatest believers that ever lived were at that moment hanging side by side! What if the faith of the far greater Believer, more sorely tried than it had ever been before, was strengthened in that hour of deepest need by the unshaken faith of the dying criminal beside Him, as He had before been strengthened, whether in mind, or body, or both, by an angel in the garden! What if the faith expressed in that prayer encouraged the Saviour of the world to believe in Himself and in His Father, by showing that some one else believed in Him still! What if the words, "When Thou comest in Thy kingdom," brought the kingdom as a living reality for a moment before His mind, and put life into His fainting spirit! Why, then, if this were so, we can understand why such faith should be given to such a man. He would have an opportunity of manifesting it as no one else ever had before or since, and by so manifesting it, of rendering to the Incarnate Son of God perhaps the greatest help that He ever received from any human being. (*S. Minton, M.A.*) *Great faith manifested* :—Oh! what wondrous, yea, miraculous faith! How much had it to contend against! 1. Against the circumstances of the case. Admit that the converted thief had witnessed Jesus' miracles, and had heretofore conceived high notions of our Lord's divinity and power; now when he saw that very Jesus, his Companion in death, nailed to the cross by his side, surely (humanly speaking), it was enough to stagger his faith, and lead him to join in the godless taunts of the godless men around him. 2. His faith had to contend against the voice of the times. For the whole national spirit was against Jesus, crying, "Away with Him, crucify Him." 3. Example was against him. All around him are unbelievers; and we know well how contaminating is the society of unbelievers. And, further, his faith leads him to reprove sin in others: "Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation"—even in the very man who in all probability was his accomplice in crime; for he adds, "We indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds" (*Luke xxiii. 41*). Well, I think his faith cannot be accounted for upon any principle derived from the nature of the case. What would you think of some politician now-a-days clinging to some favourite scheme of reform, when the spirit of the age was against him, the voice of his fellow-countrymen, his friends, and his neighbours pronounced his cherished scheme Utopian and ridiculous? The man would not be able to withstand all; and very likely he would abandon his project for ever as he finds himself thus alone in his views, or gain for himself the no very enviable appellation of a man of unsound mind. How, then, I ask, can you account for his unflinching faith? Oh! he was taught by God's Holy Spirit, and that Spirit supplies with strength in the hour of need, with comfort in trouble and tribulation. And He only can make us call Jesus "Lord, even the Lord of our salvation." (*F. McGlynn, M.A.*) *A wonderful request* :—It was a wonderful request. What a faith did it exhibit! He recognized a King in the dying Man, and saw that the Cross was the high road to His throne; he felt and proclaimed his own immortality, and knew himself no destructible thing, though the ministry of death was breaking down the fleshly tabernacle; but once assured that he had yet to enter on untried and unlimited destinies, he therefore asked to be remembered when all this sin and suffering should have passed away, and another and a wider range of being should spread before him. And "remember me." He only asked to be remembered; but it was the memory of a King, and that King Messiah, Lord of the invisible world, in whose chambers he solicited a place; and thus he evinced a thorough faith in the saving power of Jesus. What advantage in the being remembered by Jesus, unless Jesus could procure for him that pardon which He had been asking for His crucifiers? What advantage the being remembered by a king, except that as king

he must have authority to portion out allotments of happiness? So that it is no overwrought or exaggerated statement that the dying thief exhibited all the tokens which can ever be demanded of a genuine conversion. There was confession of sin, there was spirituality of mind, there was anxiety for others, there was the fullest recognition of Christ's power to deliver, and there was a mighty faith which, nothing daunted by all the circumstances of apparent helplessness and defeat, were sufficient to confound and overcome distance, sprang beyond the line of death and shame, and seemed to gaze on the palace and the crown; and though he had not an opportunity of showing by an altered life that his heart was renewed, yet his faith in Christ was so stupendous an act, that no one can doubt that, had space been allowed for development, every action would have proved its reality. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) "Lord, remember me!"—Legh Richmond, the author of "*The Dairyman's Daughter*," in one of his visits to the Young Cottager, found the little girl asleep, with her finger lying on a Bible, which lay open before her, pointing at these words, "Lord, remember me, when Thou comest in Thy kingdom!" "Is this casual, or designed? thought I. Either way is remarkable. But, in another moment, I discovered that her finger was indeed an index to the thoughts of her heart. She half awoke from her dozing state, but not sufficiently so to perceive that any person was present, and said in a kind of whisper, 'Lord, remember me—remember me—remember—remember a poor child; Lord, remember me!'" *Christ as Saviour*.—The last hours of Jesus were spent almost in silence. Teaching is at an end. His prophetic office is fulfilled. His priestly work has begun. The time has come to endure. But in the few words which He did utter He seemed to be all Saviour—never before so affectingly and impressively Saviour. I. THERE IS A CRUCIFIED MALEFACTOR. Could Jesus interest Himself in such an one? Is he not beneath His notice? Ah! the Saviour can only know man as man. It is our nature as men, with all its mysterious, dread, and ineffable possibilities, that Jesus came to redeem. A dying malefactor contrite, is nearer to Jesus than a living king impenitent and estranged from God. II. THE LORD IS VERY GRACIOUS. He did not breathe a word about that past guilty life. You and I would probably have recalled to the malefactor his terrible career, and would have felt it our duty to impress upon him a due sense of that evil state. A Saviour could not do that. Well, the Lord knew that no one ever turns to God whose heart is not already bruised and broken. When poor souls go to the Lord, it is not smiting which they need, but healing. Jesus blotted out the dreadful past, and unrolled the vision of the future. Our Lord seemed to say, "Yes, I will remember thee, but thy 'sins and thine iniquities will I remember no more.'" III. HOW ANXIOUS OUR BLESSED SAVIOUR WAS TO ASSURE THE PENITENT OF THE MERCY WHICH HE COVETED! "Verily I say unto thee," It was only in moods of special intensity and on occasions peculiarly solemn that our Lord resorted to the asseveration, "Verily I say unto thee. How the all-pitying Saviour shone forth in this emphatic expression! IV. THE GREAT REDEEMER WAS ABSORBED TO THE LAST MOMENT IN THE WELFARE OF OTHERS. V. IT WAS RIGHT TO PRAY TO THE LORD JESUS. (*H. Batchelor.*) To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.—*The mercy of Christ to the penitent thief*.—I. LET US CONSIDER THE REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION OF THE MALEFACTOR MENTIONED IN THIS PASSAGE. 1. As to the means of his conversion. He was a Jew, and had probably some general knowledge of the prophecies concerning the Messiah. And no doubt what he witnessed of our Lord's extraordinary meekness and patience under His sufferings, and His prayer for His murderers, greatly confirmed his faith in Him, as the Redeemer promised to the fathers. This shows us the importance of maintaining a becoming temper under all the provocations we are called to meet with, in the respective situations in which we are placed, that if any obey not the Word, they may, without the Word, be won by our good conversation in Christ. 2. Observe the evidence he gave of the reality of the change. 3. The prayer which he presents to our dying Lord. We see in his prayer the exercise of faith in the Redeemer, and of hope in His mercy. His genuine humility is also apparent. All he presumes to ask is to be remembered by Christ. He says nothing about receiving the brightest crown He has to bestow, or the largest mansion He has at His disposal. 4. The gracious answer which our Lord made to his urgent request. And was ever answer so satisfactory, gracious, and consolatory? II. SOME OF THE LESSONS THE CONVERSION OF THE DYING THIEF IS INTENDED TO TEACH US. 1. It shows us the sovereignty and freeness of the Divine mercy. 2. We have here a striking proof of the unspeakable efficacy of the atoning blood of Christ. 3. It becomes us to admire the almighty power of Christ, in subduing the hearts of sinners, and bringing the dis-

obedient to the wisdom of the just. 4. We shall do well to notice the prevalency of prayer, in the instance before us. For this convinced, praying sinner no sooner asks than he receives, no sooner seeks than he finds, and no sooner knocks than the door of mercy is opened unto him. 5. The subject furnishes us with a specimen of the nature of true conversion, in every age. 6. This rich display of grace is intended to animate us in our endeavours, under the most discouraging circumstances, to bring sinners to repentance. (*Essex Remembrancer.*) *Christ's greatest trophy*:—I. CHRIST'S POWER AND WILLINGNESS TO SAVE SINNERS. I believe the Lord Jesus never gave so complete a proof of His power and will to save as He did upon this occasion. In the day when He seemed most weak, He showed that He was a strong deliverer. In the hour when His body was racked with pain, He showed that He could feel tenderly for others. At the time when He Himself was dying, He conferred on a sinner eternal life. II. IF SOME ARE SAVED IN THE VERY HOUR OF DEATH, OTHERS ARE NOT. There is warning as well as comfort in these verses, and that is a very solemn warning too. They tell me loudly, that though some may repent and be converted on their death-beds, it does not at all follow that all will. A death-bed is not always a saving time. They tell me loudly that two men may have the same opportunities of getting good for their souls, may be placed in the same position, see the same things, and hear the same things—and yet only one of the two shall take advantage of them, repent, believe, and be saved. They tell me, above all, that repentance and faith are the gifts of God, and are not in a man's own power; and that if any one flatters himself he can repent at his own time, choose his own season, seek the Lord when he pleases, and, like the penitent thief, be saved at the very last—he may find at length he is greatly deceived. I want you to beware of letting slip good thoughts and godly convictions, if you have them. Cherish them and nourish them, lest you lose them for ever. Make the most of them, lest they take to themselves wings and flee away. Have you an inclination to begin praying? Put it in practice at once. Have you an idea of beginning really to serve Christ? Set about it at once. III. THE SPIRIT ALWAYS LEADS SAVED SOULS IN ONE WAY. Every saved soul goes through the same experience, and the leading principles of the penitent thief's religion were just the same as those of the oldest saint that ever lived. 1. See, then, for one thing, how strong was the faith of this man. He called Jesus "Lord." He declared his belief that He would have "a kingdom." 2. See, for another thing, what a right sense of sin the thief had. He says to his companion, "We receive the due reward of our deeds." Would you know if you have the Spirit? Then mark my question—Do you feel your sins? 3. See, for another thing, what brotherly love the thief showed to his companion. He tried to stop his railing and blaspheming, and bring him to a better mind. "Dost not thou fear God," he says, "seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" There is no surer mark of grace than this! Grace shakes a man out of his selfishness, and makes him feel for the souls of others. IV. BELIEVERS IN CHRIST WHEN THEY DIE ARE WITH THE LORD. It was a true saying of a dying girl, when her mother tried to comfort her by describing what paradise would be. "There," she said to the child, "there you will have no pains, and no sickness; there you will see your brothers and sisters, who have gone before you, and will be always happy." "Ah, mother!" was the reply, but there is one thing better than all, and that is, Christ will be there." V. THE ETERNAL PORTION OF EVERY MAN'S SOUL IS CLOSE TO HIM. "To-day," says our Lord to the penitent thief, "to-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." He names no distant period; He does not talk of his entering into a state of happiness as a thing "far away." He speaks of to-day—"this very day in which thou art hanging on the cross." How near that seems! The very moment that believers die they are in paradise. Their battle is fought; their strife is over. They have passed through that gloomy valley we must one day tread; they have gone over that dark river we must one day cross. They have drank that last bitter cup which sin has mingled for man; they have reached that place where sorrow and sighing are no more. Surely we should not wish them back again! We are warring still, but they are at peace. We are labouring, but they are at rest. We are wearing our spiritual armour, but they have for ever put it off. We are still at sea, but they are safe in harbour. We have tears, but they have joy. (*Bishop Ryle.*) *Conversion of the dying thief*:—I. THE PROMINENT FEATURES OF THIS STRIKING CONVERSION. 1. The former character of this person. 2. The means whereby the change was accomplished. Conversion is God's work, but He usually employs certain means in effecting it. (1) The words which the Saviour uttered.

(2) The spirit which the Saviour displayed. 3. The evidences he manifested of the reality of his conversion. (1) He warned and reproved his fellow-sufferer. (2) He made an open confession of his guilt, and acknowledged the justice of his sentence. (3) He vindicates the character of Christ. (4) He prays to Christ, and exercises unbounded confidence in Him. II. WHAT THOSE LESSONS ARE WHICH WE SHOULD LEARN FROM THIS WONDERFUL EVENT. 1. Let us admire the riches of Divine grace. Oh how great, how unexpected, and especially how rapid was the change. 2. How striking a proof is here afforded of the Saviour's power. What must that energy be, which, under such circumstances, could snatch this man as a brand from the burnings. 3. The danger of delay is another lesson we may deduce from this narrative. Suppose a person had once leaped unhurt from some projecting rock into the deep precipice below, would that justify others in running the same risk? Madness of the maddest kind would it be. (*Expository Outlines.*) *The great moral miracle of the Cross*:—I. THE SCENE OF THIS MORAL MIRACLE. II. THE CHARACTERS PROMINENTLY BROUGHT BEFORE US ON CALVARY. III. THE PETITION PRESENTED BY THE DYING SINNER. "Lord, remember me, when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." 1. It is a prayer that is offered up. The first prayer ever offered by him. The prayer of this penitent malefactor was sincere. 2. It was the prayer of faith; he believed in the power and willingness of the Saviour to bless Him. 3. It recognizes the supreme authority of the Saviour as a King. 4. In this prayer we see, too, his faith in the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. 5. This prayer is distinguished by humility. 6. This prayer is distinguished by fervour. IV. THE ANSWER OF THE DIVINE SAVIOUR. This answer directs our thoughts to the home of the righteous after death—paradise. In this answer of the Saviour, another great doctrine is implied—That the soul of man is immaterial; that it lives and acts when the frail body lies in the silent tomb. In this answer of the Saviour we are taught that the righteous soul, in leaving the body, ascends immediately to God. In this answer of the Saviour, too, we see His power and willingness to save—to save "to the uttermost." (*H. P. Bowen.*) *Christ preaching on the cross*:—You are all aware that God's ordinary engine for the conversion of sinners is the preaching of His Word. We think that it was so here. Lifted on the cross, Christ used it not only as an altar, but as a pulpit, from which to deliver the most touching of sermons. It was not merely that He preached by the beauty of His patience and His meekness; there must indeed have been a voice in this which ought to have spoken to the most hardened of the multitude, producing conviction of His innocence, and contrition for the share taken in His condemnation and crucifixion; but we may consider the prayer which Christ uttered for His murderers as most strictly the sermon which the malefactor heard, and which, carried home to his heart by the Spirit of God, wrought in him the change so quickly and strikingly developed. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." These, we think, were the words which penetrated the conscience of the thief, and assured him that the being who hung at his side was none other than the promised Saviour of the world; for there was contained in that prayer a distinct claim to the being the Christ—for since the Jews crucified Him for pretending to be the Messiah, Christ's saying that they knew not what they did, amounted to an assertion that He actually was the Messiah. If there were pardon for those who crucified Christ, there must be also for every offender; and hence the thief, if once led to believe that Jesus was the Christ, would be further led to see forgiveness possible, and thus apply to his fellow-sufferer for salvation. So that in that short prayer which we have characterized as the sermon of Christ, there was all the publication of the gospel, which is ordinarily made effectual, by God's Spirit, to conversion. There was a distinct announcement that every sin may be pardoned through the intercession of Christ, and what is this but the sum and substance of the gospel? And this preaching it was which, without indulging in fanciful supposition, we may believe to have been instrumental to change of heart in the malefactor. The Spirit of God took the prayer of Christ, as it often does a sentence or a text from the mouth of one of His ministers, and, winging it with power, sent it into the very soul of the man who had just reviled the Redeemer. (*H. Melville, B.D.*) *The state of the righteous after death*:—I. THE SOULS OF SAINTS SURVIVE THEIR BODIES. 1. Scripture plainly represents the soul to be different and distinct from the body. 2. The death of the body has no tendency to destroy the life of the soul. 3. Death has no more tendency to obstruct the free, voluntary, rational exercise of the soul, than to destroy it. II. The souls of the saints after death go IMMEDIATELY TO PARADISE. 1. They are essentially prepared

to go there. 2. The Scripture gives no account of any other place than heaven or hell, to which the souls of men go after death. 3. That the Scripture assures us that many saints have actually gone to heaven immediately after they left this world. Improvement: 1. This subject teaches the error of those who hold that the souls of all men are annihilated at death. 2. This subject teaches the error of those who maintain that the souls of men sleep during the intermediate state between death and the resurrection. 3. This subject teaches the enormous error of those who maintain that many of the souls of saints are at their death sent immediately to purgatory, and there confined for a longer or shorter time, before they are allowed to go to heaven. 4. This subject teaches us the immense value of the human soul. It is distinct from, and superior to, the body, in all its rational powers and faculties, and can exist in its full vigour and activity in a state of separation from the body. It is in its nature immortal, and no other power than that which gave it existence can destroy it. 5. If the soul survives the body, and as soon as it leaves it goes into a state of everlasting happiness or misery, then this life is the most important period in human existence. 6. If the souls of men survive their bodies, then the office of the ministry is a very serious and responsible office. It is the peculiar and appropriate business of ministers to watch for souls. (N. Emmons, D.D.) *Christ's word to the penitent thief*:—I. THERE IS A FUTURE

ETERNAL STATE, INTO WHICH SOULS PASS AT DEATH. This is a principal foundation-stone to the hopes and happiness of souls. And seeing our hopes must needs be as their foundation and ground-work is, I shall briefly establish this truth by these five arguments. 1. The being of a God evinces it. 2. The Scriptures of truth plainly reveal it. The consciences of all men have resentments of it. 4. The incarnation and death of Christ is but a vanity without it. 5. The immortality of human souls plainly discovers it. II. ALL BELIEVERS ARE AT THEIR DEATH IMMEDIATELY RECEIVED INTO A STATE OF GLORY AND ETERNAL HAPPINESS. Inference 1. Are believers immediately with God after their dissolution? Then how surprisingly glorious will heaven be to believers! Not that they are in it before they think of it or are fitted for it; no, they have spent many thoughts upon it before, and been long preparing for it; but the suddenness and greatness of the change is amazing to our thoughts. Who can tell what sights, what apprehensions, what thoughts, what frames believing souls have before the bodies they left are removed from the eyes of their dear surviving friends? 2. Are believers immediately with God after their dissolution? Where, then, shall unbelievers be, and in what state will they find themselves immediately after death hath closed their eyes? Ah! what will the case of them be that go the other way! To be plucked out of house and body, from among friends and comforts, and thrust into endless miseries into the dark vault of hell; never to see the light of this world any more; never to see a comfortable sight; never to hear a joyful sound; never to know the meaning of rest, peace, or delight any more. O what a change is here! 3. How little cause have they to fear death, who shall be with God so soon after their death! III. GOD MAY, THOUGH HE SELDOM DOES, PREPARE MEN FOR GLORY IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THEIR DISSOLUTION BY DEATH. Many, I know, have hardened themselves in ways of sin, by this example of mercy. But what God did at this time, for this man, cannot be expected to be done ordinarily for us: and the reasons thereof are—Reason 1. Because God hath vouchsafed us the ordinary and standing means of grace which this sinner had not; and therefore we cannot expect such extraordinary and unusual conversions as he had. 2. Such a conversion as this may not be ordinarily expected by any man, because such a time as that will never come again. It is possible, if Christ were to die again, and thou to be crucified with Him, thou mightest receive thy conversion in such a miraculous and extraordinary way; but Christ dies no more; such a day as that will never come again. 3. Such a conversion as this may not ordinarily be expected; for as such a time will never come again, so there will never be the like reason for such a conversion any more, Christ converted him upon the cross, to give an instance of His Divine power at that time, when it was almost wholly clouded. 4. None hath reason to expect the like conversion that enjoys the ordinary means; because, though in this convert we have a pattern of what free grace can do, yet as divines pertinently observe, it is a pattern without a promise; God hath not added any promise to it that ever He will do so for any other; and where we have not a promise to encourage our hope, our hope can signify but little to us. Inference 1. Let those that have found mercy in the evening of their life admire the extraordinary grace that therein hath appeared to them. O that ever God should accept the bran, when Satan hath had the flour of thy days! 2. Let

this convince and startle such as, even in their grey hairs, remain in an unconverted state. 3. Let this be a call and caution to all young ones to begin with God betime, and take heed of delays till the last, so as many thousands have done before them to their eternal ruin. 1. O set to the business of religion now, because this is the moulding age. 2. Now, because this is the freest part of your time. It is in the morning of your life, as in the morning of the day. If a man have any business to be done, let him take the morning for it; for in the after part of the day a hurry of business comes on, so that you either forget it or want opportunity for it. 3. Now, because your life is immediately uncertain. 4. Now, because God will not spare you because you are but young sinners, little sinners, if you die Christless. 5. Now, because your life will be the more eminently useful and serviceable to God when you know Him betime, and begin with Him early. 6. Now, because your life will be the sweeter to you when the morning of it is dedicated to the Lord. (*J. Flavel*.)

Scriptural mention of paradise:—This is the only occasion during the days of His flesh on which (so far at least as we know) paradise was made mention of by our Lord. Once, too, He mentions it in His glory (Rev. ii. 7), and once it is on the lips of His chief apostle (2 Cor. xii. 4). These are the only times that it occurs in the New Testament. Hanging on the accursed tree, His thoughts may well have travelled back to another tree, even the tree of life, standing in the paradise of God: in that paradise, which by all this sore agony He was at this instant winning back for the children of men—opening for them the gates of another paradise. (*Archbishop Trench*.)

The Saviour's grace:—I. There is a reference to PLACE. "Thou shalt be in paradise." The royal garden of an Oriental palace was called a paradise. The word suggests the ideas of abundance, security, beauty, and delight. Paradise has been regained by Christ—a better paradise than our first parents ever knew; for the serpent shall never creep into it, the tempter's trail shall never pollute it, Satan shall not approach it nor taint its purity by his poisonous breath. There flows the river of the water of life, issuing clear as crystal from the throne of God and of the Lamb. There grows the tree which bears twelve manner of fruits, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. No law forbids those who enter there to pluck and eat. No sword of the cherubim turns every way to debar access. There the rose is without a thorn. II. The gracious answer of Christ referred to COMPANY as well as place. "Thou shalt be with Me." The dying thief might have had doubts as to the meaning of the word "paradise." Where is it? What are its occupations and its joys? Who will be my companions? But, to prevent all painful perplexity, our Lord, in addition to the promise of paradise, added that of Himself—"Thou shalt be with Me." To be with Christ is represented throughout the New Testament as the climax of the believer's hope. Jesus said, as the greatest reward He could offer—"Where I am, there shall also My servant be." He consoled His disciples with the assurance, "I will come again, and take you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." He interceded on their behalf, saying—"Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am." Stephen's hope in death was expressed in the prayer—"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." St. Paul said he was in a strait betwixt two, "having a desire to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better." And Jesus promised this to the dying thief—"Thou shalt be with Me." The promise of being with Christ includes perfect pardon, perfect purity, and perfect bliss. The father of the preacher, now, for some years, in the presence of that Sinner's Friend whom he so loved to publish, used to tell of a soldier he well knew, who, in reward for character and long services, received from the commander-in-chief a captain's commission. But he did not feel comfortable in his rank, for he fancied he was looked down upon by his new companions on account of his origin. There can be nothing more vulgar than to treat with dishonour those who have risen to a higher station. It needs no brains to possess money acquired by one's ancestors, and rank attained by birth is not necessarily allied to genius, virtue, or achievements. To affect to despise those who, by rising from a humble origin, prove that they have merit as well as rank, is a mark of a mean and little mind. We will hope the soldier was mistaken, for British officers are gentlemen. But he felt uncomfortable, and asked to be restored to his former position. The commander-in-chief, guessing the reason, ordered a grand parade at the garrison, then, calling him by his title, walked up and down with him in familiar conversation. After this he no longer imagined that he was regarded with disfavour by his new associates. If we may compare the poor paltry distinctions of earth with those of heaven, this is what Jesus did to the dying thief. He said—"Thou shalt be with Me." I will welcome

thee at the threshold; I will lead thee by the hand into the palace; I will introduce thee to its glorious inhabitants, the angels and the spirits of just men made perfect; thou shalt be with Me. III. Our Lord's reply related to TIME. "To-day." 1. This proves the continued conscious existence of the soul after death. Surely if the dying thief had been about to fall into a deep sleep for hundreds or thousands of years the promise of being that day in paradise with Jesus would have been inappropriate and delusive. 2. We also learn that the soul of a believer is at death fitted to be at once with Jesus. There must have been plenary and immediate absolution for the penitent thief. If on that very day with Jesus, on that very day fit to be with Him, and therefore purified from all sin. (1) But is it just that a man who has lived in wickedness should, on repentance, be taken at once to paradise, as though he had never sinned? This would indeed be a difficulty were it not that Jesus died for sinners. A crucified Christ solves the mystery. Because His perfect obedience and atoning death satisfied the claims of law, those who trust in Him are delivered from the condemnation of that law. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." (2) But apart from considerations of justice, is it suitable and fit that a man who has all his life been a wilful transgressor, should, on repentance, go to dwell with Jesus? Certainly, if he is no longer what he was. Consider. You have a ship about to sail with a valuable cargo; but she cannot leave the harbour till the tide turns. Presently she swings round with the altered current. Now weigh anchor and set sail! If some one were to say "No, not yet, you are too hasty, the tide has only just turned," would you not despise the folly of such an objection? And in this dying thief the stream of his soul, which had been running down to death, had turned and was now flowing up to life, and why should not he take it at the tide and with it enter heaven? 3. We learn that earth is very near to heaven. "How glorious the hope—there may be but a step between me and paradise!" (1) Let us then be patient in affliction. Are we repining because of trials, murmuring at some difficult duty, some painful sacrifice? What? when angels and departed friends may be weaving our chaplet of victory, tuning our golden harp of praise, and gathering round the threshold to bid us welcome! Shall we give way to impatience, when this very day we may be in paradise? (2) Let this nearness make us steadfast in resisting temptation. Shall we give up the fight when on the point of winning the victory? Shall we turn back in the journey when round the rock just before us we may be within sight of home? (*Newman Hall, LL.B.*)

*The extraordinary penitence of the thief on the cross no argument for delaying repentance:—*I. THERE IS GROUND OF HOPE FOR TREMBLING SINNERS. And we may learn from this instance these following lessons. 1. They may go long on, and far on in the way to hell, whom yet God may bring home to Himself. Here is a man, a thief, whose course brought him to an ill end, to a violent death, and yet grace reaches him. 2. Grace sometimes catches them that in appearance, and to the eyes of the world, are farthest from it. 3. Grace makes a vast difference betwixt those in whom it finds none. 4. While there is life there is hope. (1) Let those that seek God early be encouraged from this, that they shall find Him (*Prov. viii. 17*). (2) Let not those whose day is almost gone, before they have begun their work, despair. (3) Let us sow beside all waters, in the morning and in the evening. II. BUT THERE IS NO GROUND HERE FOR THE CRAFTY DELAYING SINNER TO PUT OFF REPENTANCE, ESPECIALLY TILL A DYING HOUR. To set this matter in a true light, consider these following things. 1. It is a most rare example. (1) As one swallow makes not spring, so neither can this one event make a general rule that you or I may trust to. (2) Are there not eminent instances to the contrary, wherein men living in their sin have been struck down in a moment, getting no time to repent of them, but fiery wrath has put an end to their days? Consider the case of Nadab and Abihu (*Lev. x. 1, 2*), of whom it is thought they had erred through drink (*ver. 9*); Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (*Num. xvi. 31*), &c.; Ananias and Sapphira (*Acts v.*), who died instantly with a lie in their mouth. But why do I instance in particular persons? Did not millions die together in their sins, by the deluge that swept away the old world, the fire and brimstone that burned up Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim? (3) The most that this so rare an example can amount to is a possibility. It is not to so much as a probability or likelihood. 2. Though there were two thieves on the cross at that time, yet it was but one of them that got grace to repent. (1) Is it not possible that thou mayest die blaspheming if thou do not repent now in time? (2) It is at least an equal venture, that thou mayest die impenitent, as that thou mayest die a penitent. (3)

It is inconsistent with common sense, to leave that thing to a venture, which may be made sure, where a hit or a miss is of the utmost concern. (4) Nay, but the venture is very unequal; for it is far more likely that delaying thou mayest die impenitent, than that thou mayest die penitent. Few took part with the good thief amongst all the crowd of spectators; the multitude went the other thief's way, mocking (ver 35). 3. There is no evidence that this thief had before such means of grace as you have. 4. This thief was converted, when by the hand of public justice he was to die. He was cut off perhaps in the midst of his days; at least he died not by the course of nature, nor by any sickness, but was executed for his evil deeds. 5. The conversion of the thief on the cross was an extraordinary manifestation of our Lord's power, made for special reasons. And therefore though it shows what the Lord can do; it does not show what ordinarily He will do. Consider here, to evince this, that—(1) It was done in such a juncture of time, as the like never was, and the like never will be again; namely, when the Lord of glory, the Saviour of the world, was actually hanging upon the cross, paying the ransom for the lost elect world (Rom. vi. 9). (2) It was a wonder wrought in a time allotted in a particular manner beyond all times, for God's working wonders. 6. The penitent thief on the cross was not only sincere, but he glorified Christ more in his late repentance, than thou art capable to do by thine, nay more than if thou hadst lived a penitent all thy days. (*T. Boston, D.D.*) *No encouragement to defer repentance:*—A man must be able to show that when stretched on a death-bed, he shall be in the same moral position as the thief when nailed to the cross. It is clear that nothing can be more unwarranted than his arguing from the certainty of the thief repenting, to the likelihood of himself repenting; and we are confident that you cannot possibly, when your death-bed draws nigh, stand morally in the same position, and hear the gospel for the first time on your death-bed? Yet this in all probability was the case with the thief. The man who professedly puts off repentance, must necessarily smother conviction; he will therefore carry with him to his death-bed a seared and a blunted conscience; he will have refused Christ fifty, or a hundred, or a thousand times; he will have grieved the Spirit, and possibly have quenched it by his obstinate resolve to defer what he had been made to feel essential; whereas, in all probability, the thief had never determined to put off repentance; he had never resisted the Spirit; he had never heard the gospel; he had never rejected Christ. And will any one dare to think, that with all this difference between himself and the malefactor, he can be warranted in so identifying the cases as to consider the last hour of life well-fitted for the work of repentance, or to bolster himself up with the flattering persuasion, that what happened to the dying thief will happen also to him—that just as life ebbs away there shall flow in upon one who has despised a thousand warnings and steeled his heart by long despite to the Spirit of God, all that glorious tide of faith and of assurance which rolled into the soul of a long-lost prodigal, who had never before been invited home, never heard the wonderful announcement, that those condemned justly at a human tribunal, might still find acquittal at a Divine, and who still, in this, his last extremity, having shown an unprecedented faith by giving utterance to the prayer—"Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom," was sustained by those gracious words of the Redeemer—"Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." We are as clear as upon a Scriptural truth, that the only man who can think of repenting on a death-bed is the man who never stood by a death-bed. It is want of acquaintance with the frightful power with which bodily disease assails the strongest mind—it is this only that will lead men to harbour the idea that such stupendous things as the things of eternity may be fairly grappled with in a fever or a consumption. We do not say sickness throws a man beyond the limits within which repentance is possible; but we do say that in sickness there is commonly such a prostration of mind—the mind so sympathizes with the body, or rather is so swallowed up in it, that the probability is almost as an infinity to a unit, that he who has neglected God in health will be unable to seek Him under the pressure of disease. And from all this mental overthrow the dying thief was exempt. Tell me, then, is it quite right to think, that amid the emaciation of your last sickness you shall have power and collectedness of soul for this amazing prayer—"Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom"? And what right have you to hope that you shall be soothed by the gracious words, "To-day . . . paradise"? (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

VERS. 44, 45. There was a darkness over all the earth.—*The three hours' dark-*

ness :—What a call must that mid-day midnight have been to the careless sons of men! They knew not that the Son of God was among them; nor that He was working out human redemption. The grandest hour in all history seemed likely to pass by unheeded, when, suddenly, night hastened from her chambers and usurped the day. Every one asked his fellow, "What means this darkness?" Business stood still: the plough stayed in mid-furrow, and the axe paused uplifted. It was the middle of the day, when men are busiest; but they made a general pause. Around the great death-bed an appropriate quiet was secured. I doubt not that a shuddering awe came over the masses of the people, and the thoughtful foresaw terrible things. Those who had stood about the cross, and had dared to insult the majesty of Jesus, were paralyzed with fear. I. First, let us view this darkness as a MIRACLE WHICH AMAZES US. 1. It may seem a trite observation that this darkness was altogether out of the natural course of things. Since the world began was it not heard that at high noon there should be darkness over all the land. It was out of the order of nature altogether. Some deny miracles; and if they also deny God, I will not at this time deal with them. He may make certain rules for His actions, and it may be His wisdom to keep to them; but surely He must reserve to Himself the liberty to depart from His own laws, or else He has in a measure laid aside his personal Godhead, deified law, and set it up above Himself. 2. Further, this miracle was not only out of the order of nature, but it is one which would have been pronounced impossible. It is not possible that there should be an eclipse of the sun at the time of the full moon. The moon at the time when she is in her full is not in a position in which she could possibly cast her shadow upon the earth. The Passover was at the time of the full moon, and therefore it was not possible that the sun should then undergo an eclipse. This darkening of the sun was not strictly an astronomical eclipse; the darkness was doubtless produced in some other way: yet to those who were present it did seem to be a total eclipse of the sun—a thing impossible. 3. Concerning this miracle, I have also further to remark that this darkening of the sun surpassed all ordinary and natural eclipses. It lasted longer than an ordinary eclipse, and it came in a different manner. According to Luke, the darkness all over the land came first, and the sun was darkened afterwards: the darkness did not begin with the sun, but mastered the sun. It was unique and supernatural. 4. Again, this darkness appears to have been most natural and fitting. Like the earthquake and the rending of the veil of the temple, it seems a proper attendant of the Lord's passion. II. Secondly, I desire you to regard this darkness as a VEIL WHICH CONCEALS. 1. What I see in that veil is, first of all, that it was a concealment for those guilty enemies. Did you ever think of that? It is as if God Himself said, "I cannot bear it. I will not see this infamy! Descend, O veil!" Down fell the heavy shades. 2. But further, that darkness was a sacred concealment for the blessed Person of our Divine Lord. So to speak, the angels found for their King a pavilion of thick clouds, in the which His Majesty might be sheltered in its hour of misery. It was too much for wicked eyes to gaze so rudely on that immaculate Person. 3. This darkness also warns us, even us who are most reverent. This darkness tells us all that the Passion is a great mystery, into which we cannot pry. God veiled the cross in darkness, and in darkness much of its deeper meaning lies; not because God would not reveal it, but because we have not capacity enough to discern it all. 4. Once again, this veil of darkness also pictures to me the way in which the powers of darkness will always endeavour to conceal the cross of Christ. We fight with darkness when we try to preach the cross. III. Now we pass on to speak of this darkness as a SYMBOL WHICH INSTRUCTS. The veil falls down and conceals; but at the same time, as an emblem, it reveals. 1. The darkness is the symbol of the wrath of God which fell on those who slew His only begotten Son. God was angry, and His frown removed the light of day. 2. The symbol also tells us what our Lord Jesus Christ endured. The darkness outside of Him was the figure of the darkness that was within Him. In Gethsemane a thick darkness fell upon our Lord's Spirit. His day was the light of His Father's face: that face was hidden and a terrible night gathered around Him. 3. Again, I think I see in that darkness also what it was that Jesus was battling with; for we must never forget that the cross was a battle-field to Him, wherein He triumphed gloriously. He was fighting then with darkness; with the powers of darkness of which Satan is the head; with the darkness of human ignorance, depravity and falsehood. IV. I come to my fourth point, and my closing words will deal with the SYMPATHY WHICH PROPHESES. Do you see the sympathy of nature with her Lord—the sympathy of the sun in the heavens with the Sun of

Righteousness? It was not possible for Him by whom all things were made to be in darkness, and for nature to remain in the light. 1. The first sympathetic fact I see is this: all lights are dim when Christ shines not. 2. Next, see the dependence of all creation upon Christ, as evidenced by its darkness when He withdraws. It was not meet that He who made all worlds should die, and yet all worlds should go on just as they had done. If He suffers eclipse, they must suffer eclipse too; if the Sun of Righteousness be made to set in blood, the natural sun must keep touch with Him. There is no light for any man except in Christ; and till you believe in Him thick darkness shall blind you, and you shall stumble in it and perish. 3. Another practical lesson is this: If we are in the dark at this time, if our spirits are sunk in gloom, let us not despair, for the Lord Christ Himself was there. (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The veiled cross*:—I. THE SUGGESTIONS OF THIS DARKNESS. 1. It indicated the going out of the world's Light. 2. It represented the ignorance of the Gentiles, and the malignity of the Jews. 3. It reminds us of the mystery of the Atonement. II. THE EFFECTS OF THE DARKNESS UPON THOSE WHO SURROUNDED THE CROSS. 1. It increased the solemnity of the event. 2. It veiled His agony from those who were around. 3. It whispered warning to the impenitent. (A. Rowland, LL.B.)

Ver. 45. *The veil of the temple was rent.*—*The rent veil*:—This miraculous event was plainly typical of several important things. 1. This was a type of the violent rending of Christ's body on the cross. 2. This typified our Lord's own entrance into heaven. 3. This miracle intimated that, by the death of Christ, the ceremonies of the law were, at once, explained and abolished. 4. This miracle intimated that the distinction between Jew and Gentile was at an end. 5. The rending of the veil typified evangelical freeness of access to the throne of grace. 6. The miraculous rending of the veil was typical of Christ's having opened up, by His death, an entrance into heaven for all His followers. (Jas. Foote, M.A.) *The rent veil of the temple*:—I. THE VEIL IS REMOVED FROM HUMANITY. Surrounded by this ethereal light, how pale and sickly is the lamp of philosophy—how shallow are the findings of human reason—how contemptible and unintelligible are the mutterings of infidelity! Both for the reach and the grandeur of its discoveries, Christianity stands alone. Not only is it a mighty advance on all which went before, but it includes within itself that which will take infinite ages to evolve. II. NATURE IS UNVEILED. It is a fact of which we ought never to lose sight, that there is no discrepancy between the readings of Nature and the higher readings of the Christian Book. Christianity did not come to ignore nature, but rather to unveil her more hidden life and beauty. Amid those disturbing forces which we everywhere find to be at work, we are reminded that the present condition of our world does not correspond with its original integrity; that all nature stands in need of a grand renovation; that this change must be brought about by the exertion of Divine power; and that the present throes of creation will result in some mightier birth. All nature will be delivered from the bondage of corruption; and the glorious liberty of the children of God will be preceded by making all things new. Such is the light which Christianity sheds over the constitution, design, and final condition of this material world. III. TRUTH IS UNVEILED. We say not that this rending of the veil has left no mystery in the great wide field of revelation. Such a result would have been no positive advantage. Progress in discovery and in knowledge seems to be involved in the idea of mental existence and activity. Mind is endued with exhaustless power, and that power must be directed to pursuits and employments corresponding with the dignity of its nature, and the elevation of the ground to which it is raised. For this element of our nature, provision is made in that fulness of revelation which is reserved for another state of being. Heaven is a world of everlasting development. IV. THE VEIL IS LIFTED FROM THE GRAVE. For the revelation of this immortality we are indebted to the advent and the ministry of Christ. He brought life and incorruption to light. V. THE GLORIOUS FUTURE IS UNVEILED. It was like a morning without a dawn on which the Saviour rose from the dead. His resurrection was not only the triumph of Life over Death, but it became the pledge and assurance of a glorious immortality. (R. Fergusson, LL.D.)

Ver. 46. *Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.*—*That dying believers are both warranted, and encouraged, by Christ's example, believingly to commend their souls into the hands of God*:—I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN A BELIEVER'S COMMENDING OR COMMITTING HIS SOUL INTO THE HAND OF GOD AT DEATH? 1. That the soul out-

lives the body. 2. That the soul's true rest is in God. 3. The great value believers have for their souls. He thinks but little of his body comparatively. 4. These words imply the deep sense that dying believers have of the great change that is coming upon them by death; when all visible and sensible things are shrinking away from them and failing. They feel the world and the best comforts in it failing; every creature and creature-comfort failing: For at death we are said to fail (Luke xvi. 9). Hereupon the soul clasps the closer about its God, cleaves more close than ever to Him: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." 5. It implies the atonement of God, and His full reconciliation to believers, by the blood of the great Sacrifice; else they durst never commit their souls into His hands: "For it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. xii. 29). 6. It implies both the efficacy and excellency of faith, in supporting and relieving the soul at a time when nothing else is able to do it. II. WHAT WARRANT OR ENCOURAGEMENT HAVE GRACIOUS SOULS TO COMMIT THEMSELVES, AT DEATH, INTO THE HANDS OF GOD? I answer, much every way; all things encourage and warrant its so doing: for—1. This God, to whom the believer commits himself at death, is its Creator: the Father of its being: He created and inspired it, and so it hath relation of a creature to a Creator; yea, of a creature now in distress, to a faithful Creator (1 Pet. iv. 19). 2. As the gracious soul is His creature, so it is His redeemed creature; one that He hath bought, and that with a great price, even with the precious blood of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. i. 18). This greatly encourages the departing soul to commit itself into the hands of God; so you find (Psa. xxxi. 5). 3. The gracious soul may confidently and securely commit itself into the hands of God when it parts with its body at death; not only because it is His creature, His redeemed creature, but because it is His renewed creature also. All natural excellency and beauty goes away at death (Job. iv. ult.), but grace ascends with the soul; it is a sanctified, when a separate soul; and can God shut the door of glory upon such a soul, that by grace is made meet for the inheritance? Oh, it cannot be! 4. As the gracious soul is a renewed soul, so it is also a sealed soul; God hath sealed it in this world for that glory, into which it is now to enter at death. Surely, if God have sealed, He will not refuse you; if He have given His earnest, He will not shut you out; God's earnest is not given in jest. 5. Moreover, every gracious soul may confidently cast itself into the arms of its God, when it goes hence, with "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit." Forasmuch as every gracious soul is a soul in covenant with God, and God stands obliged, by His covenant and promise to such, not to cast them out, when they come unto Him. As soon as ever thou became His, by regeneration, that promise became thine (Heb. xiii. 5). 6. But this is not all; the gracious soul sustains many intimate and dear relations to that God into whose hands it commends itself at death. It is His spouse, and the consideration of such a day of espousals may well encourage it to cast itself into the bosom of Christ, its head and husband. It is a member of His body, flesh and bones (Eph. v. 30). It is His child, and He its everlasting Father (Isa. ix. 6). It is His friend. "Henceforth," saith Christ, "I call you not servants, but friends" (John xv. 15). What confidence may these, and all other the dear relations Christ owns to the renewed soul, beget, in such an hour as this is! 7. The unchangeableness of God's love to His people gives confidence they shall in no wise be cast out. They know Christ is the same to them at last as He was at first; the same in the pangs of death as He was in the comforts of life. Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the end (John xiii. 1). He doth not love as the world loves, only in prosperity; but they are as dear to Him when their beauty and strength are gone, as when they were in the greatest flourishing. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's (Rom. xiv. 8). Deduction 1. Are dying believers, only, warranted and encouraged thus to commend their souls into the hands of God? What a sad strait, then, must all dying unbelievers be in about their souls? Such souls will fall into the hands of God, but that's their misery, not their privilege. They are not put by faith into the hands of mercy, but fall by sin into the hands of justice. 2. Will God graciously accept, and faithfully keep what the saints commit to Him at death? How careful then should they be to keep what God commits to them, to be kept for Him while they live. 3. If believers may safely commit their souls into the hands of God, how confidently may they commit all lesser interests, and lower concerns into the same hand. 4. Is this the privilege of believers, that they can commit their souls to God in a dying hour? Then how precious, how useful a grace is faith to the people of God, both living and dying? 5. Do the souls of dying

believers commend themselves into the hands of God? Then let not the surviving relations of such sorrow as men that have no hope (*J. Flavel.*) *The last words of Christ*:—Jesus Christ did not die for Himself, any more than He lived for Himself; and He not only “died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God,” but the manner of His dying was a lesson and a pattern for us. That is the Christian way of dying—the way for all to die; and who would wish, or could imagine, any fitter or happier way? Who would not, in this sense, say, “Let me die the death of my Saviour, and let my last end be like His!” And how it disarms our helplessness of its terrors! “I am powerless,” it seems to say, “and therefore I commend to Thine omnipotence this frail and sensitive soul, which came at first from Thy creating hand. I do so reverently, but I do so confidently, for I do so as a child who calls Thee, ‘My Father.’” I have said it expresses dependence—and so it does; but in Christ’s case, and even in our own, the confidence expressed is more prominent still. In His case there seems a suggestion of the words, “No man taketh My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself”; “I, as My own act, commend it, Father, to Thee.” We do not possess that power: our souls are “required” of us. But, more than that, we are accustomed to think of dying as the most terrible crisis of our history; the hour of supreme peril to our souls; the appalling event which decides our fate for ever. It is a great mistake. Our dying does not decide our future fate: it is our living which does that; the course we have taken, the choices we have made when opportunities were in our hands, and we used them, or threw them away! And therefore, I say, the peril of living is greater far than any peril there can be in dying. I commend My spirit into Thy hands to be delivered. Consider any human spirit now; consider your own. Before it are great possibilities of good and of evil. It must be so. If we can be God’s true children, and live with, and become like our Father, it is terrible to fail of this; and it is more dreadful still—it is an indescribable degradation—not even to care about it. Since, then, we are in this case; capable of being God’s children, but hindered and prevented from being so by our evil, there is supreme need for us each to cry, “Father, hear me, deliver me! Into Thy hands I commend my spirit—my sin-stained spirit. I am Thine. Save me!” I commend my spirit into Thy hands, to be made pure. The deliverance and reformation which the Scriptures say that we require, they describe by the strong expressions “a new birth,” “a new creation.” They say that is needed in order that we may stand “without blame” before God. Does not our sad experience say the same? God prescribes it. God promises to perform it, and on us. (*T. M. Herbert, M.A.*) *Soul-resignation into the hands of God*:—Yea, and it is a very profitable thing for us to do it, hereby we make a virtue of necessity; and where can we lodge our souls in safer hands? If a man cannot keep a thing himself, but must trust and deposit it in other hands, will he not do it in the safest hands that he can find? Now three things there are that are required to a safe hand: power, wisdom, and love. If I deposit a thing in a man’s hand to keep, he must be able to keep it for me against violence, else his hand is no safe hand; though he be able and have power to keep it for me, yet if he be prodigal and lavish, and not wise, I shall not count his hand a safe hand to keep my *depositum*: but though he be never so wise, yet if he be not my friend, I shall not trust him with any great matter: but if a man be able, wise and friendly, then his hand is a safe hand to keep my *depositum*. And again if we do not commend, commit, and resign ourselves and souls into His hands, we must be responsible for them ourselves. What benefit shall we get thereby? Much every way. This resignation of our souls and selves unto God is an inlet to many mercies, graces, and comforts. As for mercies and blessings; what greater blessing can there be in this world than to enjoy one’s-self; under God to enjoy one’s-self, and to be free from all things? As it is an inlet unto many blessings, so it is an inlet unto many graces and duties. What grace or duty will ye instance in? Will ye instance in prayer? It opens the sluices of prayer; and, as one speaks well, though you pray never so long or loud, yet if you do not resign up your soul and will unto God, your prayer is but nonsense, and a contradiction *in re*. As it is an inlet unto many graces, so it is an inlet also unto many comforts; yea, indeed, unto all our comforts: for what comfort can a man have in himself or condition, till he hath truly resigned and given up himself and soul and will unto God? but being done, ye may freely go about your business. If a man have a suit in law, and have left his cause in the hand of an able, careful friend and lawyer, he is quiet; much more may we be quiet, when we have left and lodged our case and way and soul with God. Well, but then how is this work to be done that we may truly resign and give up ourselves,

our souls, and our wills unto God? It is not to be done slightly and overly, but seriously and solemnly. It is an ordinary thing with men to say, "The will of the Lord be done." As this work is not to be done slightly and overly, so neither is it to be done forcedly and lastly, but freely and firstly. As it is not to be done lastly and forcedly, so it is not to be done partially, and by halves, but fully and totally. "I am Thine," saith David to God, "Oh, save me" (Psa. cxix. 94). As this resignation must not be done partially, and by halves, so it must not be done conditionally, but absolutely. As this resignation is not to be done conditionally, so it is not to be done passively, and in a way of submission only, but actively. It is one thing for a man to submit unto God's will, and another thing to resign up himself and will to the will of God. As this resignation is not to be done passively, so it is not to be done deceitfully and feignedly, but in all plainness and sincerity. Well, but when is this work to be done? It is to be done daily. There are some special times and seasons which do call for this work. I will name five. When a man doth convert and turn unto God. When a man is called forth unto any great work, or service, or employment, especially if it be beyond his own strength and power. When a man is in any great danger, distress, and affliction, then he is to resign and give up himself and will unto God. And if you would be able to do this work of soul-resignation in the day of your death rightly, then use yourself to do it every day. That is easily done which is often done. (*W. Bridge, M.A.*) *The soul given to God*:—Be sure that you do not give away your soul from God to anything else whilst you live. If you have given away your soul unto other things whilst you live, it will be a vain thing for you to say Christ's words when you come to die. When men come to their death, ye know they do ordinarily make their wills; and in the first place they say, I give my soul unto God; then if they have lands, or houses, or money, they give them to their wives, children, relations and friends, according to their pleasure. But suppose, now, that a man shall give land or house to such or such a child or friend, which he hath sold or given away before, shall his will stand in force? Will not all men say, This he could not give away, for he had sold that or given that before? So in regard of one's soul; though upon my death I say, As for my soul, I give that to God; yet if I have sold away my soul before, for unjust gain, or have given away my soul before unto filthy pleasures, how can I resign and give that to God when I die; will not the Lord say, Nay, this is none of yours to give, this you had sold or given away before? Oh, then, be sure of this, that whilst you live, you do not sell or give away your soul from God, for then death-bed resignation will be but as the act and deed of a man that makes his will when he is not *compos mentis*. (*Ibid.*)

Vers. 47-49. Certainly this was a righteous man.—*The Cross, the source of communion*:—Many reasons have been given to account for that providence of God which determined that the Cross should be the kind of death that Christ should die; and that He should not end His life by sword or fire, by which the animal victims in the Old Testament which were types of Him were slain and offered. It is usual to explain the choice of this mode of death by showing its correspondence with various types and prophecies. Christ could not have been the antitype of the brazen serpent which was lifted up; neither could the prophecy—"they pierced My hands and My feet" have been fulfilled by Him, unless He died by crucifixion. This reply, however, only removes the inquiry another step off; to prove that our Lord's death is the accomplishment of type and prophecy may be useful as an argument whereby to identify Him as the Messiah, but it can cast no light upon the events themselves. The revealing beforehand of that which was to come to pass, was a merciful provision to aid our faith and lead our minds to Christ, but it did not determine the things which should happen; any form of death might have been equally revealed by prophet and lawgiver. Passing by without mention many mystical expositions, the extreme torture of this kind of death has been assigned as a cause for its selection. Some have considered it the most painful death which a human being could undergo. Moreover, the Cross added to actual pain another, and an extremely delicate kind of torment—shame and humiliation. We can conceive another reason why our Lord died by crucifixion, and one with which in the line of thought we are pursuing we are especially concerned; Christ willed to die by a death which was itself a spectacle. They "came together to that sight." The brazen serpent was lifted up for the express purpose of being looked upon. Christ ascribes power to the fact of His elevation upon the Cross—"I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." His death became an object of attraction, because it

was an object of contemplation; the eye of sense, and the eye of a devout imagination could gaze upon His crucified form. The text describes the effects produced upon those persons who were standing before the Cross, when Christ died. Both the centurion and the people were deeply moved. They were representatives of different nations; and they illustrate the impressions which the Cross would make upon the mind and heart of man; there must be convictions in the mind concerning the person of the Sufferer before the heart can be touched with compunction. In the centurion we see the working of the Cross upon the human mind; in the people, upon the human heart. Together these represent the Cross as "the source of compunction." I. THE CENTURION PASSED THROUGH A MENTAL REVOLUTION AS HE WATCHED JESUS. St. Mark says the centurion "stood over against Him"—that is—was in full view of the Cross; he was able then to see very distinctly the end. He was probably closer to Christ than any one else, for he was stationed there for the purpose of watching Him. The power of this sight may be estimated by considering the man who was impressed by it—his calling, race, and position. He was an unlikely person to be affected by such a sight. He was not present from any motive of curiosity, like many who were in that crowd. He was there on duty. Further, the centurion was not likely to be convinced through previous instruction; he did not come to the Cross with the religious training of the Jew. Another element in reckoning the power of the Cross upon the mind of the centurion is his position; he was the subject of an unprecedented impression. It was not a current of sensation with which he fell in, but which he seems to have led and inaugurated. He stands out as the first and prominent exponent of the thought and feeling which the Cross had stirred. Whilst, however, we are trying to form some estimate of the power of the Cross from the extreme unlikelihood of the person who was affected by it; we must on the other hand take notice of certain events which, accompanying Christ's death, aroused the mind of the centurion. His faith was an intelligent faith, and not the product of a passing excitement or heated imagination; it rested on evidences. We must look to these, or otherwise we shall be in danger of regarding his faith as a sort of unreasoning impulse; and besides this, the inquiry will lead to some very solemn thoughts concerning our Lord's death. The loud cry which Christ uttered when He died, astonished the centurion. When he "saw that He so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God." Faith is the gift of God, but God gives also sensible helps to create dispositions for receiving His gifts. External grace appeals through the senses, whilst internal grace acts on the mind and will. The man was by this cry aroused either from indifference or hostility or contempt, and brought into a condition of receptiveness of Divine truth. There was another ground of faith connected with this cry, which also had its share in convincing the centurion. In the text St. Luke says when he "saw what was done, he glorified God." St. Matthew is more explicit, and mentions the earthquake as causing fear. Christ was like Samson, He manifested His strength more in His death than in His life. II. BUT BESIDES THE EFFECT UPON THE CENTURION, THE CROSS MANIFESTED ITS POWER UPON THE CROWD OF PERSONS WHO HAD GATHERED TOGETHER TO WITNESS THE CRUCIFIXION. They had cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" when Pilate had brought Him forth, His raiment dripping with the precious blood; but death produced a reaction, which pity could not excite. When the murderer sees death written upon the face of his victim, the passion which had prompted the deed melts into fear and remorse. The people felt that they had a share in that passion, had been instrumental in causing it; and the result was a new sorrow—new, as an experience, yet long ago predicted. Their sorrow was the fulfilment of the prophecy—"They shall look on Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him"; it was an epoch in the history of moral convictions. Their compunction was a result of grace, and not the mere cooling of vindictive passion. Those people had assembled out of curiosity and malice; they had come hither without any dispositions for receiving grace, but the Cross overcame them. The Spirit of God used that Cross as the instrument of a deep conviction of sin; and they became the first-fruits, the earnest of that which should afterwards be the normal effect of the Passion. Mourning for sin would henceforth be excited by the thought—"Jesus, my love, is crucified." Compunction was a great grace. At the moment when the sin of man had culminated, for God to unlock His treasures and begin to bestow them is an astounding evidence of His quenchless love! That those very persons who had rejected Him should thus be visited inwardly with a subduing and softening unction from the Holy One is a marvel of Divine forbearance. CONCLUSION: There are three thoughts, which are

of practical importance in enabling us now to experience the power of the Cross as a source of compunction. 1. Our sins caused the Passion. We did not drive the nails into His hands or pierce His side, but—"He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities . . . the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." He "bare our sins in His own body on the tree." As the crowd who smote their breasts returned, they each one felt "I had a part in that." What the outward share in that Passion was to the actual offender, that our sins are in relation to the Cross as a mystery. 2. Again, the Cross was not endured for mankind as for a multitude indiscriminately, but for each individually. Every human being might truly say, "He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*." 3. Once more—as the constant recurrence to the thought of Christ's omniscience seems to bring the Cross close to us; so to regard His remembrance of all that happened on Calvary, now that He is in glory, is another help to meditation on the Passion. The memory of Christ, uninfluenced by the passage of time, can look back on every detail of the Passion. He is not capable of forgetfulness, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; each event, each sorrow, each pang is treasured up in His memory with a recollection more vivid than the creature can possess. Though in His glory, He is the same Jesus who suffered; and the marks of suffering abide—the sacred wounds, which are the perpetual memorials of His Passion. As with the eye of the soul we now behold Him and hold communion with Him, the remembrance of Calvary will pass from Him to us, and the spirit of compunction cause the heart to mourn over sin. Such thoughts may help us to gaze upon the Cross with a true sorrow. Whether it be the conversion of a whole life we need, or the renewal of some part of it, or victory over some habit of sin, we must place ourselves with the crowd before the Cross and pray for the manifestation of its power on our own minds and hearts. If there is the sense of lack of dispositions, the Cross can create them; only let us continue to contemplate it. Fire melts ice; the sun unfolds the flowers; the Cross can melt the hardened heart, and draw out from it new graces. (*W. H. Hutchings, M.A.*)

Ver. 48. *Smote their breasts.*—*The spectators of the crucifixion smiting their breasts*:—I. BEHOLDING CHRIST ON THE CROSS. Look on the multitude now—see how they who before had triumphed in His misery, are struck with deep astonishment. One says, "Surely this was a righteous man." Another says, "This is the Son of God," "And all the people who came together to that sight seeing what had passed, smote their breasts and returned." They came to the execution with eager haste and bitter zeal. They retired slow, silent, and pensive, with downcast looks and labouring thoughts. Their smiting their breasts indicated some painful sensations within. 1. It expressed their conviction of the innocence and divinity of this wonderful sufferer. Whatever sentiments they had entertained in the morning, they had now seen enough to extort from them an acknowledgment that this was a "righteous man"—this was the "Son of God." This character Jesus had openly assumed; and with unwavering constancy He maintained it to the last. (1) Observe His calmness. Amidst the rudest and most provoking insults, He discovered no malice or resentment toward His enemies; but all His language and behaviour was mild and gentle. When He was reviled, He reviled not again; but committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously. (2) See His benevolence. He attended to the case of His afflicted mother, and commended her to the care of His beloved disciple. He wrought a miracle to heal an enemy wounded in the attempt to seize Him. He extended mercy to a malefactor who was suffering by His side. (3) Consider His humble piety. He maintained His confidence in God; called Him His God and His Father; and into His hands committed His Spirit. Such distinguished piety, benevolence, and constancy, under trials like His, showed Him to be a righteous man—to be more than man. And heaven itself bore solemn testimony in His favour. The darkness which overspread the land was evidently supernatural. 2. Their smiting their breasts was expressive of their compassion for this innocent and glorious Sufferer. Their rage, which had been wrought up to the highest strain, now began to subside, and give way to the tender feelings of humanity. 3. This action expressed a deep remorse of conscience. II. BEHOLDING CHRIST IN THE HOLY COMMUNION. To behold this Divine Saviour in the flesh, and to see Him expire on the cross, was the lot only of those who lived in His day. But the frequent contemplation of His death is a matter of so much importance, that He was pleased, just before He suffered, to appoint an ordinance for the purpose of exhibiting His death to our view, and bringing it to our remembrance. Here He is

set forth crucified before our eyes. Do we turn away from this ordinance? We have little reason to think we should have attended the crucifixion on any higher motive than mere curiosity. If a real regard to Him would have invited us to follow Him to the cross, the same regard will invite us to come and see Him at His table. 1. Have any of you entertained indifferent notions of Christ and His religion? Come here, and reflect on those characters of divinity which He exhibited. 2. Here meditate on the worth of your souls. 3. Here behold the great evil of sin. 4. Here meditate on the wonderful mercy of God. 5. Look here and behold an instructive example of patience and resignation. 6. Look to Christ and learn to despise the world. 7. Look to Christ, and learn meekness and forgiveness. (*J. Lathrop, D.D.*)

The great sight.—I. THE SIGHT. It is the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. You have often heard of it; have you thought of it until you could see it? Have its different incidents been grouped in your mind so as to form a complete picture? Try to realize it. II. THE LESSONS OF THE SIGHT. 1. The first lesson to which we beg your attention is the antagonism of sin to God. As if to show to the universe the true nature and tendency of sin in all its forms, all classes of worldlings were grouped around the Cross; each had an opportunity of expressing its feelings; and how awfully significant and awfully condemnatory was the part which they acted! All classes—the religious world, and the learned world, and the sceptical world, and the fashionable world, and the money-loving world, ay, and the ordinary working world—all combined to show the murderous nature and the God-defiant attitude of sin. 2. But if this sight teaches the antagonism of sin to God, it also teaches us God's hatred of sin. We cannot account for the Saviour's sufferings if they have not some connection with the sin of man. Even a heathen could understand, that if an innocent being suffers, it must be because of the sins of others. Kajarnak, a chieftain inhabiting the mountains of Greenland, notorious for the robberies and murders he had perpetrated, came down to where a missionary in his hut was translating the Gospel of John. His curiosity being excited by the process, he asked to have it explained; and when the missionary told him how the marks he was making were words, and how a book could speak, he wished to hear what it said. The missionary read to him the narrative of the Saviour's sufferings, when the chief immediately asked, "What has this Man done? Has He robbed anybody—has He murdered anybody?" "No," replied the missionary, "He has robbed no one, murdered no one; He has done nothing wrong." "Then why does He suffer? why does He die?" "Listen," said the missionary; "this Man has done no wrong, but Kajarnak has done wrong; this Man has not robbed any one, but Kajarnak has robbed many; this Man has murdered no one, but Kajarnak has murdered—Kajarnak has murdered his wife, Kajarnak has murdered his brother, Kajarnak has murdered his child; this Man suffered that Kajarnak might not suffer; died that Kajarnak might not die." "Tell me that again," said the astonished chieftain; and by the repetition of the story the hard-hearted murderer was brought in contrition and tears to the foot of the Cross. Even so the Bible tells us, "He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; He bore our sins in His own body on the tree." 3. But if this sight teaches such a fearful lesson in reference to God's hatred of sin, thank God it also teaches that a way has been prepared by which men may escape from sin's consequences. He who became our Sin-bearer did not lay down the load till He had borne our sins away. He did not cease to suffer until He could say, "It is finished." III. THE FEELINGS WHICH THE CONTEMPLATION OF THE SIGHT IS FITTED TO AWAKEN. 1. The first feeling which it naturally excites is that of which the bystanders were the subjects, when, "beholding the things which were done, they smote their breasts, and returned"—a feeling of shuddering horror at the magnitude of their offence. 2. But the sight is also fitted to awaken the apprehension of danger. This feeling, in the case of His murderers, mingled with the horror with which they regarded their crime. They did not understand the doctrine of the Messiahship sufficiently to know that even His death might become the ground of their pardon; and a fearful foreboding of punishment, as well as an appalling consciousness of guilt, led them to smite their breasts when they beheld the things that were done. And, no doubt, the Cross is fitted to awaken this feeling in every sinner to whom it has not imparted the hope of salvation. For nowhere is the evil desert of sin so strikingly exhibited. 3. But the sight is also fitted to awaken hopeful feelings. Whether any of the men who smote their breasts were led to cherish the hope of pardon, the narrative does not say; but we doubt not that some of them were among the three thousand who, on the day of Pentecost, found that the blood which they had shed was a

sufficient atonement for the sin of shedding it, and that the death which they had been instrumental in effecting was the occasion of their endless life. Even so does the Cross proclaim pardon to you, and by it all who believe are justified from all things. The same sight which awakens in you an appalling sense of sin, and a fearful apprehension of punishment, tells you, that though you have done so wickedly and deserved to endure such suffering, there is pardon in Christ for you. Look at it until the peace which it speaks takes possession of your souls—look until you understand what Christ has done for you—look until your fears are dispelled—look until the boundless love which it reveals awakens in you the beginnings of a new and better life—look with the assurance that you cannot look in vain, for He, whose promise never fails, has said, “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” (*W. Landels.*) *Mourning at the sight of the Crucified*:—I. First, then, let us ANALYZE THE GENERAL MOURNING which this text describes. “All the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.” They all smote their breasts, but not all from the same cause. Others amongst that great crowd exhibited emotion based upon more thoughtful reflection. They saw that they had shared in the murder of an innocent person. No doubt there were a few in the crowd who smote upon their breasts because they felt, “We have put to death a prophet of God.” In the motley company who all went home smiting on their breasts, let us hope that there were some who said, “Certainly this was the Son of God,” and mourned to think He should have suffered for their transgressions, and been put to grief for their iniquities. Those who came to that point were saved. II. We shall now ask you to JOIN IN THE LAMENTATION, each man according to his sincerity of heart, beholding the Cross, and smiting upon his breast. I shall ask you first to smite your breasts, as you remember that you see in Him your own sins. Looking again—changing, as it were, our stand-point, but still keeping our eye upon that same, dear crucified One, let us see there the neglected and despised remedy for our sin. Still keeping you at the cross foot, every believer here may well smite upon his breast this morning as he thinks of Who it was that smarted so upon the Cross. Who was it? It was He who loved us or ever the world was made. III. Remember that AT CALVARY, DOLOROUS NOTES ARE NOT THE ONLY SUITABLE MUSIC. After all, you and I are not in the same condition as the multitude who had surrounded Calvary; for at that time our Lord was still dead, but now He is risen indeed. Look up and thank God that death hath no more dominion over Him. He ever liveth to make intercession for us, and He shall shortly come with angelic hands surrounding Him, to judge the quick and dead. The argument for joy overshadows the reason for sorrow. Lastly, there is one thing for which we ought always to remember Christ's death with joy, and that is, that although the crucifixion of Jesus was intended to be a blow at the honour and glory of our God—though in the death of Christ the world did, so far as it was able, put God Himself to death, and so earn for itself that hideous title, “a deicidal world,” yet never did God have such honour and glory as He obtained through the sufferings of Jesus. Oh, they thought to scorn Him, but they lifted His name on high! (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Lessons at Calvary*:—1. See here accumulated evidence of the truth of Christianity. Think of the fulfilled prophecies already noticed. 2. See here the true atonement for sin, and receive it by faith. 3. See here, and admire, the love of the Father, and of the Son to perishing sinners. This display of the Father's love far surpasses any other which He has given. 4. See here the certainty and the dreadful nature of the punishment of the obstinately wicked in the other world. 5. See here your example. What I chiefly refer to at present is His patient submission to His sufferings. 6. See here the most powerful motives to repentance, the mortification of sin, and the prosecution of holiness. In the last place, see here every encouragement to perishing sinners to come to Christ for safety, and to believers to rejoice more and more in confidence in His merits. (*Jas. Foote, M.A.*)

Vers. 50-56. A man named Joseph.—*Joseph of Arimathea*:—1. We have here an illustration of the slow process by which some are brought to the full acknowledgment of the truth. 2. An illustration of how the very extremity of a cause brings fresh adherents from unexpected quarters. 3. An illustration of how the true character, the real spirit and power of a man, may be manifested in a single act. (*M. Hutchison.*) *Joseph of Arimathea*:—I. HE WAS A DISCIPLE OF JESUS SECRETLY. II. HE WAS LED TO BOLDLY AND OPENLY ACKNOWLEDGE CHRIST. A great trial brought out his character more clearly. When

most of those who had followed Jesus during His ministry had forsaken Him and fled, then the weak one was made strong. III. HE WAS, ALL THIS TIME, WAITING FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD. Quietly preparing himself for full development of Christian character. And he was blessed in so doing. In His own good time God revealed Himself to this timid, yet faithful, disciple. (*H. G. Hird, B.A.*)

Laid it in a sepulchre.—*Significance of Christ's burial*.—The burial of the Lord is a part of the gospel. Thus St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 4). 1. His burial was an assurance that His resurrection was a reality: for His Body was taken down by friends in the presence of foes who knew that He was dead, and deposited by them, not in a common tomb, but in a cave, hollowed out of a hillside, with a great stone rolled to block up the entrance, which was guarded by the soldiers of Pilate. 2. His burial also was the last humiliation offered to Him; for, though Joseph and Nicodemus and the women who assisted performed it as a work of piety and love, yet in it He was not the less associated with us, whose bodies must be committed to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. He was the Incorruptible, and yet was buried, and they prepared to embalm Him as if He had been corruptible. In birth from a womb, and in burial in a tomb, He was one with His sinful brethren. 3. His burial is in a remarkably mysterious way connected with our baptism. The font represents the grave of the Lord, in which, as having died with Him, we are mystically and sacramentally buried, and from which we rise again, endued with new life from Him, as He rose from His grave endued with new life (Col. ii. 12; Rom. vi. 1-4). (*M. F. Sadler.*)

Our Lord's burial.—It is strange that so few have preached on the subject of our Redeemer's burial. I. Supposing ourselves to be sitting in the garden with our eyes fixed upon the great stone which formed the door of the tomb, we first of all ADMIRE THAT HE HAD A GRAVE AT ALL. We wonder how that stone could hide Him who is the brightness of His Father's glory; how the Life of all could lie among the dead; how He who holds creation in His strong right hand could even for an hour be entombed. 1. Admiring this, we would calmly reflect, first, upon the testimony of His grave that He was really dead. Those tender women could not have been mistaken; their eyes were too quick to suffer Him to be buried alive, even if any one had wished to do so. Jesus was a real Man, and truly tasted the bitter pangs of death. 2. The testimony of the grave to Christ's union with us. Before me rises a picture. I see the cemetery, or sleeping place, of the saints, where each one rests on his lowly bed. They lie not alone, but like soldiers sleeping round their captain's pavilion, where He also spent the night, though He is up before them. The sepulchre of Jesus is the central grave of God's acre; it is empty now, but His saints lie buried all around that cave in the rock, gathered in ranks around their dear Redeemer's resting-place. Surely it robs the grave of its ancient terror when we think that Jesus slept in one of the chambers of the great dormitory of the sons of men. 3. Very much might be said about the tomb in which Jesus lay. (1) It was a new tomb, wherein no remains had been previously laid, and thus if He came forth from it there would be no suspicion that another had arisen, nor could it be imagined that He rose through touching some old prophet's bones, as he did who was laid in Elisha's grave. As He was born of a virgin mother, so was He buried in a virgin tomb, wherein never man had lain. (2) It was a rocky tomb, and therefore nobody could dig into it by night, or tunnel through the earth. (3) It was a borrowed tomb; so poor was Jesus that He owed a grave to charity; but that tomb was spontaneously offered, so rich was He in the love of hearts which He had won. That tomb He returned to Joseph, honoured unspeakably by His temporary sojourn therein. 4. Now, note that our Lord's tomb was in a garden; for this is typically the testimony of His grave to the hope of better things. Just a little beyond the garden wall you would see a little knoll, of grim name and character, the Tyburn of Jerusalem, Golgotha, the place of a skull, and there stood the Cross. That rising ground was given up to horror and barrenness; but around the actual tomb of our Saviour there grew herbs and plants and flowers. A spiritual garden still blooms around His tomb; the wilderness and the solitary place are glad for Him, and the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose. He hath made another paradise for us, and He Himself is the sweetest flower therein. 5. Sitting over against the sepulchre, perhaps the best thought of all is that now it is empty, and so bears testimony to our resurrection. 6. Yet another thought comes to me, "Can I follow Christ as fully as these two women did? That is to say, can I still cling to Him though to sense and reason His cause should seem dead and laid in a rocky sepulchre? Can I like Joseph and Magdalene be a disciple of a dead Christ? Could

I follow Him even at His lowest point?" II. WE REJOICE IN THE HONOURS OF CHRIST'S BURIAL. 1. Its first effect was the development of timid minds. Joseph and Nicodemus both illustrate the dreadful truth that it is hard for them that have riches to enter into the kingdom of God; but they also show us that when they do enter they frequently excel. If they come last they remain to the last. If cowards when others are heroes, they can also be heroes when even apostles are cowards. Brave are the hearts which stand up for Jesus in His burial. I like to remember that the burial of the Lord displayed the union of loving hearts. The tomb became the meeting-place of the old disciples and the new, of those who had long consorted with the Master, and those who had but newly avowed Him. Magdalene and Mary had been with the Lord for years, and had administered to Him of their substance; but Joseph of Arimathea, as far as his public avowal of Christ is concerned, was, like Nicodemus, a new disciple; old and new followers united in the deed of love, and laid their Master in the tomb. A common sorrow and a common love unite us wondrously. III. I must now pass to a third point. While sitting over against the sepulchre WE OBSERVE THAT HIS ENEMIES WERE NOT AT REST. They had their own way, but they were not content; they had taken the Saviour, and with wicked hands they had crucified and slain Him; but they were not satisfied. They were the most uneasy people in the world, though they had gained their point (see Matt. xxvii. 62-66). Christ is dead, but they are afraid of Him! He is dead, but they cannot shake off the dread that He will vanquish them yet. They are full of agitation and alarm. Nor was this all; they were to be made witnesses for God—to sign certificates of the death and resurrection of His Anointed. In order that there might be no doubt about the resurrection at all, there must be a seal, and they must go and set it; there must be a guard, and they must see it mustered. The disciples need not trouble about certifying that Jesus is in the grave, these Jews will do it, and set their own great seal to the evidence. These proud ones are sent to do drudges' work in Christ's kitchen, to wait upon a dead Christ, and to protect the Body which they had slain. IV. And now our last thought is that while these enemies of Christ were in fear and trembling WE NOTE THAT HIS FOLLOWERS WERE RESTING. It was the seventh day, and therefore they ceased from labour. The Marys waited, and Joseph and Nicodemus refrained from visiting the tomb; they obediently observed the Sabbath rest. I am not sure that they had faith enough to feel very happy, but they evidently did expect something, and anxiously awaited the third day. They had enough of the comfort of hope to remain quiet on the seventh day. Now, beloved, sitting over against the sepulchre while Christ lies in it, my first thought about it is, I will rest, for He rests. What a wonderful stillness there was about our Lord in that rocky grave. The great stone shuts out all noise, and the Body is at peace. Well, if He rests, I may. If for a while the Lord seems to suspend His energies, His servants may cry unto Him, but they may not fret. He knows best when to sleep and when to wake. As I see the Christ resting in the grave, my next thought is, He has the power to come forth again. The rest of the Christian lies in believing in Christ under all circumstances. Once more, it will be well if we can obtain peace by having fellowship with our Lord in His burial. Die with Him, and be buried with Him; there is nothing like it. I desire for my soul while she lives in the Lord that, as to the world and all its wisdom, I may be as a dead man. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

CHAPTER XXIV.

Vers. 1-10. Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre.—*The first Easter morning*:—The realm of nature a symbol of the realm of grace. 1. The gloomy night. 2. The much-promising dawn. 3. The breaking day. (*Van Oosterzee*.) *The first pilgrims to the Holy Sepulchre*:—1. How mournful they go thither. 2. How joyful they return. (*Ibid.*) *Easter brightness*:—How on Easter morning it began to be bright—1. In the garden. 2. In human hearts. 3. Over the cross. 4. For the world. 5. In the realm of the dead. (*Ibid.*) *Easter morning*:—The first rays of the glory of Christ in the dawn of the Easter morning. 1. The stone rolled away. 2. The

glittering angels. 3. The hastening women. (*Arndt.*) *The open grave*.—The open grave of the Risen One—1. An arch of His triumph. 2. A bow of peace denoting heavenly favour and grace. 3. A door of life for the resurrection of our spirit and our body. (*Hofacker.*) *Easter among the graves*.—1. The stone of the curse is rolled away therefrom. 2. There dwell angels therein. 3. The dead are gone out therefrom. (*Rautenberg.*) *The Easter festival*.—A festival of—1. The most glorious joy. 2. The most glorious victory. 3. The most glorious faith. 4. The most glorious hope. (*Schmid.*) *The Lord's Day*.—Stations on the line of your journey are not your journey's end, but each one brings you nearer. A haven is not home; but it is a place of quiet and rest, where the rough waves are stayed. A garden is a piece of common land, and yet it has ceased to be common land; it is an effort to regain paradise. A bud is not a flower, but it is the promise of a flower. Such are the Lord's Days; the world's week tempts you to sell your soul to the flesh and the world. The Lord's Day calls you to remembrance, and begs you rather to sacrifice earth to heaven and time to eternity, than heaven to earth and eternity to time. The six days not only chain you as captives of the earth, but do their best to keep the prison doors shut, that you may forget the way out. The Lord's Day sets before you an open door. Samson has carried the gates away. The Lord's Day summons you to the threshold of your house of bondage to look forth into immortality—your immortality. The true Lord's Day is the eternal life; but a type of it is given to you on earth, that you may be refreshed in the body with the anticipation of the great freedom wherewith the Lord will make you free. (*J. Pulsford.*) *Why seek ye the living among the dead?*—*The living not among the dead*.—I. THE FACT ANNOUNCED BY THE ANGEL IS, AS WE CAN SEE WHEN WE LOOK BACK ON IT, AMONG THE BEST ATTESTED IN HUMAN HISTORY. For forty days the apostles continually saw Jesus Christ risen, touched Him, spoke with Him, ate and drank with Him as before His death. They staked everything upon this fact. It was to them a fact of experience. One or two people may be hallucinated, but not a multitude. A large number of people will not easily be so swayed by a single interest or a single passion as to believe simultaneously in a story that has no foundation in fact. II. The fact of the resurrection is the ground of THE REMONSTRANCE of the angels with the holy women—"Why seek ye the living among the dead?" But is this question applicable only to them during that pause when they felt the shock of the empty tomb? Let us consider. 1. First of all, then, it would seem that we may literally seek the living among the dead if we seek Christ in a Christianity, so termed, which denies the resurrection. If Christ's body never left the grave, if it has somewhere mingled with the dust of earth, then, however we may be attracted by His moral teaching, we have no ground for hoping in Him as our Redeemer: there is nothing to prove that He was the Son of God in the way He pointed out, or that He has established any new relation between earth and heaven. 2. But nearly the same thing may happen in cases where the resurrection is not denied, but, nevertheless, men fail to see what habits of thought about our Lord it involves. His life is continued on among us; only its conditions are changed. "Lo, I am with you alway," &c. "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." To think of Him as only one of the great teachers of the world, who have come and disappeared, is to lose sight of the significance of His resurrection from the grave; it is to rank Him in thought with men whose eminence has not saved them from the lot of mortality, and whose dust has long since mouldered in the tomb. It is to lose sight of the line which parts the superhuman from the human. It is to seek the living among the dead. 3. Yet more literally do we seek the living among the dead, if without formally rejecting Christianity we give the best of our thought, of our heart, of our enthusiasm, to systems of thought, or to modes of feeling, which Jesus Christ has set aside. 4. We may not be tempted in these ways to seek the living among the dead teachers or dead elements of old or untrustworthy ways of thinking. But there is a risk of our doing so, certainly not less serious and very much more common, to which we are all exposed. As you know, our Lord's resurrection is a moral as well as an intellectual power. While it convinces us of the truth of Christianity it creates in us the Christian life. We are risen with Christ. The moral resurrection of Christians is a fact of experience. Resurrection from the grip of bad habits, from the charnel-house of bad passions; resurrection from the enervation, corruption, and decay of bad thoughts, bad words, bad deeds, to a new life with Christ, to the life of warm and pure affections, the life of a ready and vigorous will, of a firm and buoyant hope, of a clear strong

faith, of a wide and tender charity. But, as a matter of fact, how do we risen Christians really act? We fall back, willingly or wilfully, into the very habits we have renounced. Our repentance is too often like the Lent of Louis the Fourteenth; it is a paroxysm, followed, almost as a matter of course, by the relapse of Easter. To do the great French monarch justice, he did not expect to find Christ's presence in sin and worldliness, as do they who complain of the intellectual difficulties of faith and prayer, while their lives are disposed of in such a manner, that it would be wonderful indeed if faith and prayer could escape suffocation in that chaos of everything save the things which suggest God. (*Canon Liddon.*)

Christ, a quickening Spirit.—1. Observe how Christ's resurrection harmonizes with the history of His birth. Others have all been born in sin, "after Adam's own likeness, in his image," and, being born in sin, they are heirs to corruption. But when the Word of Life was manifested in our flesh, the Holy Ghost displayed that creative hand by which, in the beginning, Eve was formed; and the Holy Child, thus conceived by the power of the Highest, was (as the history shows) immortal even in His mortal nature, clear from all infection of the forbidden fruit, so far as to be sinless and incorruptible. Therefore, though He was liable to death, "it was impossible He should be holden" of it. Death might overpower, but it could not keep possession; "it had no dominion over Him." He was, in the words of the text, "the Living among the dead." And hence His rising from the dead may be said to have evinced His Divine origin. Such is the connection between Christ's birth and resurrection; and more than this might be ventured concerning His incorrupt nature were it not better to avoid all risk of trespassing upon that reverence with which we are bound to regard it. Something might be said concerning His personal appearance, which seems to have borne the marks of one who was not tainted with birth-sin. Men could scarce keep from worshipping Him. When the Pharisees sent to sieze Him, all the officers, on His merely acknowledging Himself to be Him whom they sought, fell backwards from His presence to the ground. They were scared as brutes are said to be by the voice of man. Thus, being created in God's image, He was the second Adam: and much more than Adam in His secret nature, which beamed through His tabernacle of flesh with awful purity and brightness even in the days of His humiliation. "The first man was of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven." 2. And if such was His visible Majesty, while He yet was subject to temptation, infirmity, and pain, much more abundant was the manifestation of His Godhead when He was risen from the dead. Then the Divine essence streamed forth (so to say) on every side, and environed His Manhood as in a cloud of glory. 3. He ascended into heaven, that He might plead our cause with the Father (Heb. vii. 25). Yet we must not suppose that in leaving us He closed the gracious economy of His Incarnation, and withdrew the ministration of His incorruptible Manhood from His work of loving mercy towards us. "The Holy One of God" was ordained, not only to die for us, but also to be "the beginning" of a new "creation" unto holiness in our sinful race; to refashion soul and body after His own likeness, that they might be "raised up together, and sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Blessed for ever be His holy name! before He went away He remembered our necessity, and completed His work, bequeathing to us a special mode of approaching Him, a holy mystery, in which we receive (we know not how) the virtue of that heavenly body, which is the life of all that believe. This is the blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, in which "Christ is evidently set forth crucified among us"; that we, feasting upon the sacrifice, may be "partakers of the Divine nature." (*J. H. Newman, D.D.*)

Easter good news.—I. We take THE ANGEL'S DECLARATION first as the grand truth here—"He is risen!" Who is thus risen? Who was dead, and has thus sprung from the grave to life? It is Christ Jesus the Lord, who died for our sins, is risen for our justification. The Saviour is no more a sufferer; His sacrificial deed is done. 1. How deeply instructive and interesting is the Gospel history of this great resurrection miracle! Take this great truth away from the Church, all faith is then vain, all hope destroyed, and the whole majestic building of Christianity falls and crumbles into ruins for ever. 2. We delight, then, to go with these godly women to the tomb of Christ, and while, perhaps, we bring too some humble offering of pure hearts to Him, to find how little it is needed, while we hear some glad tidings of His power, and rejoice in His risen glory. II. THE ANGELS' EXPOSITION. This may be considered as twofold. 1. As a gentle reproof for want of faith. With all their praiseworthy affection for Christ, even when dead, these devout women, last at the cross, and first at the sepulchre, showed

great forgetfulness of the Redeemer's words, and their want of faith, as of the other disciples, appears thus gently reprov'd. 2. This is a faithful expostulation to Christians even now. True religion gives gladness, not deep gloom. (*J. G. Angley, M.A.*) *The Lord is risen indeed*:—I. CERTAIN INSTRUCTIVE MEMORIES which gather around the place where Jesus slept "with the rich in His death." Though He is not there, He assuredly once was there, for "He was crucified, dead, and buried." 1. He has left in the grave the spices. We will not start back with horror from the chambers of the dead, for the Lord Himself has traversed them, and where He goes no terror abides. 2. The Master also left His grave-clothes behind Him. What if I say He left them to be the hangings of the royal bed-chamber, wherein His saints fall asleep? See how He has curtained our last bed! 3. He left in the tomb the napkin that was about His head. Let mourners use it to wipe away their tears. 4. He left angels behind Him in the grave. Angels are both the servitors of living saints and the custodians of their dust. 5. What else did our Well-beloved leave behind Him? He left an open passage from the tomb, for the stone was rolled away; doorless is that house of death. Our Samson has pulled up the posts and carried away the gates of the grave with all their bars. The key is taken from the girdle of death, and is held in the hand of the Prince of Life. As Peter, when he was visited by the angel, found his chains fall from off him, while iron gates opened to him of their own accord, so shall the saints find ready escape at the resurrection morning. One thing else I venture to mention as left by my Lord in His forsaken tomb. I visited some few months ago several of the large columbaria which are to be found outside the gates of Rome. You enter a large square building, sunk in the earth, and descend by many steps, and as you descend, you observe on the four sides of the great chamber innumerable little pigeon-holes, in which are the ashes of tens of thousands of departed persons. Usually in front of each compartment prepared for the reception of the ashes stands a lamp. I have seen hundreds, if not thousands, of these lamps, but they are all unlit, and indeed do not appear ever to have carried light; they shed no ray upon the darkness of death. But now our Lord has gone into the tomb and illuminated it with His presence, "the lamp of His love is our guide through the gloom." Jesus has brought life and immortality to light by the gospel; and now in the dove-cotes, where Christians nestle, there is light; yea, in every cemetery there is a light which shall burn through the watches of earth's night till the day break and the shadows flee away, and the resurrection morn shall dawn. So then the empty tomb of the Saviour leaves us many sweet reflections, which we will treasure up for our instruction. II. Our text expressly speaks of VAIN SEARCHES—"Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen." There are places where seekers after Jesus should not expect to find Him, however diligent may be their search, however sincere their desire. You cannot find a man where he is not, and there are some spots where Christ never will be discovered. 1. In the grave of ceremonialism. 2. Among the tombs of moral reformation. 3. In the law. 4. In human nature. 5. In philosophy. III. We will again change our strain and consider, in the third place, UNSUITABLE ABODES. The angels said to the women, "He is not here, but is risen." As much as to say—since He is alive He does not abide here. Ye are risen in Christ, ye ought not to dwell in the grave. I shall now speak to those who, to all intents and purposes, live in the sepulchre, though they are risen from the dead. 1. Some of these are excellent people, but their temperament, and perhaps their mistaken convictions of duty, lead them to be perpetually gloomy and desponding. 2. Another sort of people seem to dwell among the tombs: I mean Christians—and I trust real Christians—who are very, very worldly. 3. Once more on this point, a subject more grievous still, there are some professors who live in the dead-house of sin. Yet they say that they are Christ's people. Nay, I will not say they live in it, but they do what, perhaps, is worse—they go to sin to find their pleasures. IV. I want to warn you against UNREASONABLE SERVICES. Those good people to whom the angels said, "He is not here, but is risen," were bearing a load, and what were they carrying? What is Joanna carrying, and her servants, and Mary, what are they carrying? Why, white linen, and what else? Pounds of spices, the most precious they could buy. What are they going to do? Ah, if an angel could laugh, I should think he must have smiled as he found they were coming to embalm Christ. "Why, He is not here; and, what is more, He is not dead. He does not want any embalming, He is alive." In other ways a great many fussy people do the same thing. See how they come forward in defence of

the gospel. It has been discovered by geology and by arithmetic that Moses was wrong. Straightway many go out to defend Jesus Christ. They argue for the gospel, and apologize for it, as if it were now a little out of date, and we must try to bring it round to suit modern discoveries and the philosophies of the present period. That seems to me exactly like coming up with your linen and precious spices to wrap Him in. Take them away. V. THE AMAZING NEWS which these good women received—"He is not here, but He is risen." This was amazing news to His enemies. They said, "We have killed Him—we have put Him in the tomb; it is all over with Him." A-ha! Scribe, Pharisee, priest, what have you done? Your work is all undone, for He is risen! It was amazing news for Satan. He no doubt dreamed that he had destroyed the Saviour, but He is risen! What a thrill went through all the regions of hell! What news it was for the grave! Now was it utterly destroyed, and death had lost his sting! What news it was for trembling saints. "He is risen indeed." They plucked up courage, and they said, "The good cause is the right one still, and it will conquer, for our Christ is still alive at its head. It was good news for sinners. Ay, it is good news for every sinner here. Christ is alive; if you seek Him He will be found of you. He is not a dead Christ to whom I point you to-day. He is risen; and He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

The resurrection of Christ:—Let us consider, first, the evidences, and, second, the purposes of the second life of Jesus—the life after the crucifixion. I. AS TO THE EVIDENCES OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION, THERE ARE BOTH EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL LINES OF PROOF WHICH GUARD THIS GREAT AND SUBLIME DOCTRINE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH. 1. Jesus Christ actually died. A million and a half of awe-stricken witnesses saw Him die. 2. The second fact in the series of proofs is that Christ was buried. Interment is not often granted to crucified criminals. But Providence overruled the sordidness of the cautious scribes and priests, in order to multiply the witnesses to the resurrection. 3. The next fact is that the sepulchre somehow or other was emptied on the third day. How came the sepulchre to be emptied? There are only two theories. The rulers said the body was stolen out of it. The disciples said the body had risen from it. It is manifest that the enemies would not steal the body of Christ, and how improbable it is that His disciples should have done it. How could it have been done by twelve men against sixty, when Jerusalem was filled with an excited crowd, when the moon shone clearly in a cloudless oriental sky? No; it cannot be believed, and we are driven back therefore to the theory that He actually rose. 4. The internal evidence is equally convincing. Consider the existence and the spread of persecution for the testimony as to the resurrection of Christ. II. Consider THE PRACTICAL PURPOSES WHICH THE RESURRECTION IS INTENDED TO WORK OUT IN OURSELVES. 1. It is a manifestation, a vindication of ancient prophecy and of the personal character of the Messiah as well. 2. It is a seal of the acceptance of the sacrifice of Jesus, and by consequence of infinite moment to confirm the hopes of the world. 3. It is an earnest of our own rising, a pledge of immortality for the race for which the Second Adam died. 4. Look at the resurrection as an encouragement. There is a great error, brethren, in Christendom just now, and that is that we believe in a dead Christ. He is not dead, He is living—living to listen to your prayers, living to forgive your sins. (W. M. Punshon, D.D.)

The living Christ:—I. A SURPRISING FACT. Jesus among the dead! 1. The Saviour's perfect humanity. 2. The Saviour's perfect identity with the cause of man. II. A MORE SURPRISING FACT. Jesus no longer among the dead! 1. His mission to the tomb was accomplished. 2. His vision of immortality was realized. 3. The true object of faith was secured. (The Weekly Pulpit.)

An Easter sermon:—I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESURRECTION. 1. If Jesus really died and then rose from the dead, materialism is completely overthrown. 2. Pantheism receives its death-blow with the establishment of Christ's resurrection. 3. All far-reaching scepticism is undermined. II. THE FACT OF THE RESURRECTION. Conclusion: 1. We should live less in tombs. The grave is not half as large as we think. No life is buried there. Everything Christ-like is risen. Let life, not death, be our companion. 2. We must trust Christ implicitly. The living way has been set before us. He who is the life of the world has lighted its highway from the cradle, not to, but through the tomb. (D. O. Clark.)

I. The living dead:—THE DEAD ARE THE LIVING Language, which is more accustomed and adapted to express the appearances than the realities of things, leads us astray very much when we use the phrase "the dead" as if it expressed the continuance of the condition into which

men pass in the act of dissolution. It misleads us no less, when we use it as if it expressed in itself the whole truth even as to that act of dissolution. "The dead" and "the living" are not names of two classes which exclude each other. Much rather, there are none who are dead. Oh, how solemnly sometimes that thought comes up before us, that all those past generations which have stormed across this earth of ours, and then have fallen into still forgetfulness, live yet. Somewhere at this very instant, they now verily are! We say, they were, they have been. There are no have beens! Life is life for ever. To be is eternal being. Every man that has died is at this instant in the full possession of all his faculties, in the intensest exercise of all his capacities, standing somewhere in God's great universe, ringed with the sense of God's presence, and feeling in every fibre of his being that life, which comes after death, is not less real, but more real; not less great, but more great; not less full or intense, but more full and intense, than the mingled life which, lived here on earth, was a centre of life surrounded with a crust and circumference of mortality. The dead are the living. They lived whilst they died; and after they die, they live on for ever. And so we can look upon that ending of life, and say, "it is a very small thing; it only cuts off the fringes of my life, it does not touch me at all." It only plays round about the husk, and does not get at the core. It only strips off the circumferential mortality, but the soul rises up untouched by it, and shakes the bands of death from off its immortal arms, and flutters the stain of death from off its budding wings, and rises fuller of life because of death, and mightier in its vitality in the very act of submitting the body to the law, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Touching but a part of the being, and touching that but for a moment, death is no state, it is an act. It is not a condition, it is a transition. Men speak about life as "a narrow neck of land, betwixt two unbounded seas": they had better speak about death as that. It is an isthmus, narrow and almost impalpable, on which, for one brief instant, the soul poises itself; whilst behind it there lies the inland lake of past being, and before it the shoreless ocean of future life, all lighted with the glory of God, and making music as it breaks even upon these dark, rough rocks. Death is but a passage. It is not a house, it is only a vestibule. The grave has a door on its inner side. God has taken our dead to Himself, and we ought not to think (if we would think as the Bible speaks) of death as being anything else than the transitory thing which breaks down the brazen walls and lets us into liberty. II. SINCE THEY HAVE DIED, THEY LIVE A BETTER LIFE THAN OURS. In what particulars is their life now higher than it was? First, they have close fellowship with Christ; then, they are separated from this present body of weakness, of dishonour, of corruption; then, they are withdrawn from all the trouble, and toil, and care of this present life; and then, and not least, surely, they have death behind them, not having that awful figure standing on their horizon waiting for them to come up with it! These are some of the elements of life of the sainted dead. What a wondrous advance on the life of earth they reveal if we think of them! They who have died in Christ live a fuller and a nobler life, by the very dropping away of the body; a fuller and a nobler life by the very cessation of care, change, strife and struggle; and, above all, a fuller and nobler life, because they "sleep in Jesus," and are gathered into His bosom, and wake with Him yonder beneath the altar, clothed in white robes, and with palms in their hands, "waiting the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body." For though death be a progress—a progress to the spiritual existence; though death be a birth to a higher and nobler state; though it be the gate of life, fuller and better than any which we possess; though the present state of the departed in Christ is a state of calm blessedness, a state of perfect communion, a state of rest and satisfaction; yet it is not the final and perfect state, either. III. THE BETTER LIFE, WHICH THE DEAD IN CHRIST ARE LIVING NOW, LEADS ON TO A STILL FULLER LIFE when they get back their glorified bodies. The perfection of man is, body, soul, and spirit. That is man, as God made him. The spirit perfected, the soul perfected, without the bodily life, is but part of the whole. For the future world, in all its glory, we have the firm basis laid that it, too, is to be in a real sense a material world, where men once more are to possess bodies as they did before, only bodies through which the spirit shall work conscious of no disproportion, bodies which shall be fit servants and adequate organs of the immortal souls within, bodies which shall never break down, bodies which shall never hem in nor refuse to obey the spirits that dwell in them, but which shall add to their power, and deepen their blessedness, and draw them closer to the God whom they serve and the Christ after the likeness of whose

glorious body they are fashioned and conformed. "Body, soul, and spirit,"—the old combination which was on earth is to be the perfect humanity of heaven. We have nothing to say, now and here, about what that bodily condition may be—about the differences and the identities between it and our present earthly house of this tabernacle. Only this we know—reverse all the weakness of flesh, and you get some faint notion of the glorious body. Why, then, seek the living among the dead? "God giveth His beloved sleep"; and in that peaceful sleep, realities, not dreams, come round their quiet rest, and fill their conscious spirits and their happy hearts with blessedness and fellowship. (*A. Maclaren, D.D.*) *A present Christ* :—

I. THE TENDENCY TO THINK OF CHRIST AS PAST RATHER THAN PRESENT. 1. In His work of redemption. 2. In His converting power. 3. In His Pentecostal influences. 4. In His administration of earthly affairs. **II. THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF THIS TENDENCY UPON THE CHURCH, COLLECTIVELY AND INDIVIDUALLY, WHEN INDULGED.** 1. It tends to the exaltation of the purely dogmatic over the practical and experimental confession of Christ. 2. It encourages the substitution of speculative theories of Christ's atoning work, for the actual power and continuance of that work itself in its application to human needs. 3. It deprives the Church of its great incentive to an active co-operation in the saving work of the Redeemer. **III. THE GROUNDS AND THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE HIGHER AND ABSOLUTELY TRUE VIEW OF JESUS CHRIST AS PERSONALLY PRESENT AT ALL TIMES WITH HIS PEOPLE, IN THE POWER AND RICHNESS OF HIS DIVINE LIFE.** His promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." Observe therefore—1. The necessity and comfort of habitually thinking of Christ as personally with us in the present varied needs and trials and duties of life. 2. The cheering prospect that death will only set us free, as it set Him free, from the restraints and limitations of this mixed world, and usher us into a state of boundless spiritual activity. 3. The uniqueness and authority of the gospel of Christ as the revelation of this life of the spirit, and as the power which can effectually save us from the fear and power of death. (*H. R. Harris.*) *Christ is risen* :—I. Christ is risen, and THE LAST OPPOSING MONARCHY HAS FALLEN. Death reigns no more. Sin has been vanquished by Christ's Cross, and the empire of the Prince of Darkness has been for ever destroyed. II. He has risen, and HIS OWN DIVINE WORDS HAVE BEEN FULFILLED. Christ claimed to be supernatural in every sphere of being. Easter substantiates His claim to mastery over death. If this promise has been fulfilled, so will all others be. III. He has risen, and THE DEAD HAVE NOT PERISHED. Personal immortality for each of us, and reunion with the loved and lost. IV. Christ is risen, and NO LASTING CHRISTIAN CHURCH CAN REST ON A CLOSED TOMB. (*W. M. Statham, B.A.*) *The resurrection of Christ* :—As the resurrection of Christ is believed chiefly on the authority of His disciples, it is desirable to inquire respecting the circumstances in which they spoke. I. THEY DID NOT EXPECT THAT HE WOULD RISE FROM THE DEAD, NOR BELIEVE THAT HE HAD RISEN, EVEN WHEN IT WAS TOLD TO THEM. II. THEY COULD GAIN NOTHING BY ASSERTING IT, IF IT WERE UNTRUE. As a consequence of declaring His resurrection, they could foresee only affliction, reproach, and death. III. THE DISCIPLES WERE AS WELL QUALIFIED AS ANY OTHER MEN, TO KNOW WHETHER THE THINGS WHICH THEY AFFIRMED WERE SO. The subjects respecting which they testified were cognizable by the senses. Had they been dark, abstruse principles—had they been some rare phenomena in the material world, but removed from inspection by the several senses, there would have been reason for suspecting their capacity to know, and fully to comprehend them. IV. CHRIST APPEARED TO THEM MANY TIMES. Not once or twice only, but so often as to leave no room for doubt. V. There is one more circumstance which gives weight to the evidence that He had risen. This relates to THE MANNER IN WHICH HE AT VARIOUS TIMES APPEARED TO HIS DISCIPLES AND OTHERS, WHO WERE ASSOCIATED WITH HIM. The circumstances in which men's imaginations are wrought into the belief that they have seen spirits, are very peculiar. Except in cases of disease, they are not infested with these unfounded notions in open day, and in the society of their friends. The regions of the dead, the burial places of our acquaintance, and the scenes of some tragical event, are the favoured retreats of these terrors. But never in the enjoyment of health, in open day, and amongst tried friends, have men been known to be afflicted by these creations of their own minds. Now, it was not in scenes like these that Christ appeared to His disciples. And in most of these circumstances it is utterly impossible for the imaginations of men to form images which they might mistake for living beings. Nothing but a living man could perform the various things which the disciples have attributed to Christ. In conclusion: 1. Christ's resurrection must have been a matter of great joy to His

disciples. Now, instead of looking forward only to days of shame, and years of disgrace, they began to anticipate glory, and honour, and immortality. 2. The resurrection of Christ establishes the truth of Christianity. 3. The resurrection of Christ is a victory over the power of death. 4. If our resurrection be demonstrably established by the resurrection of Christ, it becomes us to be cautious how we use these bodies in the present life. (*J. Foot, D.D.*)

*Lessons:—*1. In the fact of Christ's resurrection we have the great proof of His Divine mission, and a call to submit to Him as our teacher and Lord. 2. Let us improve this event as a demonstration that Christ's sacrifice was accepted, and an encouragement to trust in His righteousness for justification. 3. The resurrection of Christ is connected with the observance of the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath. 4. Let us see that this event has its proper purifying effect on our heart and conduct. We are called to be conformed to the image of Christ in general, and we are particularly called to be conformed to Him in His death and resurrection. 5. The resurrection of Jesus Christ presents the pattern and pledge of the happy and glorious resurrection of all His followers. There will be a resurrection "both of the just and of the unjust." 6. The resurrection of Christ should keep us in mind that we shall stand before Him as our judge. (*Jas. Foote, M.A.*)

*Angels as remembrancers:—*But now it should be more carefully observed that this reminding the women of what had been said to them by Christ is probably but an example of what continually occurs in the ministration of angels. The great object of our discourse is to illustrate this ministration, to give it something of a tangible character; and we gladly seize on the circumstance of the angels recalling to the minds of the women things which had been heard, because it seems to place under a practical point of view what is too generally considered mere useless speculation. And though we do not indeed look for any precise repetition of the scene given in our text, for angels do not now take visible shapes in order to commune with men, we know not why we should not ascribe to angelic ministration facts accurately similar, if not as palpable, proceeding from supernatural agency. We think that we should be borne out by the experience of every believer in Christ when we affirm that texts of Scripture are often suddenly and mysteriously brought into the mind, texts which have not perhaps recently engaged our attention, but which are most nicely suited to our circumstances, or which furnish most precisely the material then needed by our wants. There will enter into the spirit of a Christian, on whom has fallen some unexpected temptation, a passage of the Bible which is just as a weapon wherewith to foil his assailant; or, if it be an unlooked for difficulty into which he is plunged, the occurring verses will be those best adapted for counsel and guidance; or, if it be some fearful trouble with which he is visited, then will there pass through all the chambers of the soul gracious declarations which the inspired writers will seem to have uttered and registered on purpose for himself. And it may be that the Christian will observe nothing peculiar in this; there may appear to him nothing but an effort of memory, roused and acted on by the circumstances in which he is placed; and he may consider it as natural that suitable passages should throng into his mind, as that he should remember an event at the place where he knows it to have happened. But let him ask himself whether he is not, on the other hand, often conscious of the intrusion into his soul of what is base and defiling? Whether, if he happen to have heard the jeer and the blasphemy, the parody on sacred things, or the insult upon moral, they will not be frequently recurring to his mind? recurring, too, at moments when there is least to provoke them, and when it had been most his endeavour to gather round him an atmosphere of what is sacred and pure. And we never scruple to give it as a matter of consolation to a Christian, harassed by these vile invasions of his soul, that he may justly ascribe them to the agency of the devil; wicked angels inject into the mind the foul and polluting quotation; and there is not necessarily any sin in receiving it, though there must be if we give it entertainment in place of casting it instantly out. But why should we be so ready to go for explanation to the power of memory, and the force of circumstances, when apposite texts occur to the mind, and then resolve into Satanic agency the profanation of the spirit with what is blasphemous and base. It were far more consistent to admit a spiritual influence in the one case as well as in the other; to suppose that, if evil angels syllable to the soul what may have been heard or read of revolting and impure, good angels breathe into its recesses the sacred words, not perhaps recently perused, but which apply most accurately to our existing condition. We do not wish to draw you away, in the least degree, from the truth that "the eternal uncreated Spirit of God alone, the

Holy Ghost, is the author of our sanctification, the infuser into us of the principle of Divine life, and He only is able to overrule our wills, to penetrate the deepest secrets of our hearts, and to rectify our most inward faculties." But surely it does not infringe the office of the Holy Ghost to suppose, with Bishop Bull, that "good angels may, and often do, as instruments of the Divine goodness, powerfully operate upon our fancies and imaginations, and thereby prompt us to pious thoughts, affections, and actions." They were angels, as you will remember, which came and ministered to our Lord after He had been exposed in the wilderness to extraordinary assaults from the devil. He had the Spirit without measure; but, nevertheless, as though to mark to us the agency which this Spirit is often pleased to employ, it was in and through angels that consolation was imparted; even as, in the dread hour of His last conflict with the powers of darkness, "there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him." Not only, therefore, can I regard it as credible that angels stir up our torpid memories and bring truths to our recollection, as they did to the women at the sepulchre of Christ—I can rejoice in it as fraught with consolation, because showing that a created instrumentality is used by the Holy Ghost in the renewing our nature. And surely it may well excite gladness that there is around the Christian the guardianship of heavenly hosts; that, whilst his pathway is thronged by malignant spirits, whose only effort is to involve him in their everlasting shame, it is also thronged by ministers of grace, who long to have him as their companion in the presence of God; for there is thus what we might almost dare to call a visible array of power on our side, and we may take all that confidence which should result from being actually permitted to look on the antagonists, and to see that there are more with us than there are against. But it is hardly possible to read these words of the angels and not to feel how reproachfully they must have fallen on the ears of the women! how they must have upbraided them with want of attention and of faith. For had they but listened heedfully to what Christ had said, and had they but given due credence to His words, they would have come in triumph to welcome the living, in place of mournfully with spices to embalm the dead. But God dealt more graciously with these women than their inattention, or want of faith, had deserved; He caused the words to be brought to their remembrance, whilst they might yet inspire confidence, though they could hardly fail also to excite bitter contrition. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *Risen*:—A rising Saviour demands a rising life. For remember, brethren, there are two laws. One law, by which all men gravitate, like a stone, to the earth—another law, equally strong, the law of grace, by which every renewed man is placed under the attractive influence of an ascending power, by which he must be always drawn higher and higher. For just as when a man, lying upon the ground, gets up and stands upright, his upright posture draws up with it all his limbs, so in the mystical body of Jesus Christ, the risen Head necessarily draws up all the mystical members. The process of elevation is one which, beginning at a man's conversion to God, goes on day by day, hour by hour, in his tastes, in his judgments, in his affections, in his habits. First it is spiritual, then it is material. Now, in the rising spirit of the man, first he sees higher and higher elevations of being, and gradually fits for the fellowship of the saints and the presence of God. And presently, on that great Easter morning of the resurrection, in his restored body, when it shall wake up, and rise satisfied with its Redeemer's likeness, made pure and ethereal enough to soar, and blend and co-operate with the spirit in all its holy and eternal exercises. But what I wish to impress upon you now is, that this series in the ever-ascending scale begins now; that there is, as every believer feels, a daily dying, so there is also, as our baptism tells us, a daily resurrection. It is always well to take advantage of particular seasons to do particular proper things. Now to-day the proper thing is to rise, to get up higher. This Easter day ought not to pass without every one of us beginning with some new affection, some new work. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*)

Vers. 13-35. Two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus.—*The journey to Emmaus*:—I. WE SEE IN THIS APPEARANCE, AS IN THE OTHERS, SOMETHING VERY CHARACTERISTIC OF OUR LORD'S HABITS AND WAYS DURING HIS LIFETIME. His disciples and followers were always craving for publicity and display. He was always retiring from too much of that, carrying on His work as quietly as possible. And so here. Jesus rises alone—at the break of day. No mortal sees Him put on immortality. Bright angels stand as sentinels while He arrays Himself. It is enough that His disciples see the empty tomb, the grave-clothes, and "the place where the Lord lay." II. WE MAY SEE HOW EASILY STILL, IN THAT RISEN LIFE, HE

ENTERS INTO COMMUNICATION WITH MEN; HOW LITTLE DIFFICULTY HE HAS IN JOINING ANY COMPANY, OR ANY TWO OR THREE WITH WHOM HE WISHES TO BE! III. THIS APPEARANCE OF CHRIST IS LIKE A MESSAGE OF FRATERNITY AND DIVINE REGARD, ESPECIALLY TO PLAIN, SIMPLE, ORDINARY MEN—to what we may call common men, who wear no distinction and possess no advantage whatever over their fellows. For who were these two men? No one knows anything about them. In all probability there was not much to know, except that they were disciples, that they loved Him. IV. WE HAVE AN INSTANCE HERE OF THE ATTRACTIVE POWER OF SORROW TO HIM. They walked, and talked, and were sad. And then He drew near and went with them. V. THIS, HOWEVER, WE MUST OBSERVE, THAT IT IS NOT TO EVERY KIND OF TROUBLE AND SADNESS THAT HE GRANTS IMMEDIATE ASSUAGEMENT. Here you see He draws near at once to two sad men. But what are they saying? They are talking of Him. Why are they sorrowing? They are sorrowing about Him. So our sorrow, if it is to be sanctified and turned into joy, must have Christ in it. VI. THERE IS A SORROW AND A DARKNESS EXPRESSLY SENT BY CHRIST, OR, AT ANY RATE, HELD BY HIM AROUND HIS PEOPLE. A sorrow kept, as it were, beyond the time when it might naturally be ended, kept for the accomplishment of some purposes of grace which could not be so well attained, perhaps not attained at all, if the darkness were melted away. To take the language of the passage, "Our eyes are holden that we should not know Him," even when He is with us. So, oftentimes, our eyes are holden that we should not know Him. Strange things happen to us, and we think not that His hand is upon them all. All the instruction we get in the darkness is from Him; but we do not know that it is from Him directly, and immediately, until the darkness is over. VII. IT IS A BLESSED MOMENT IN LIFE WHEN WE KNOW HIM, COME WHEN, AND HOW, AND WHERE IT MAY—WHEN WE ARE SURE THAT HE IS NEAR! In those moments we are glad of the present, and we look to the future without a fear. VIII. THEY ARE BRIEF, THEY ARE TRANSIENT AS THE GLOW OF THE MORNING—NOT SETTLED AS THE RADIANCE OF THE DAY. "They knew Him and"—what next? A long happy conversation, until the evening wore into the night, and the stars came out on high? A journey into Jerusalem again the next morning, with still more delightful discourse, to meet His surprised and rejoicing disciples there? Not so. "And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him, and He vanished out of their sight!" Such is the end of all high communion times, of all vision-hours in this life. They are but brief. They can but be brief; there is more work to do, and more sorrow to drink, and more time to travel through; and Jesus in His glory retires, that these things may be done, and that He may come again when need shall be! He comes down to lift us up, to intensify our longings for heaven, to entice us home. And of course He does not stay. He is always coming, and always "vanishing" out of our sight, that we may the more long for and labour after the place, the glory, the life in which He would have us for ever be. (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*)

The walk to Emmaus.—I. THE WAY. 1. To these two disciples that was the way of sadness and gloom. 2. The sadness of those two disciples sprang from doubt or unbelief. 3. Though that was the way of sadness and doubt to those two disciples, yet they communed and reasoned together on the best themes. II. THE METHOD OF CHRIST'S COMMUNICATIONS BY THE WAY. "He talked with us," "and opened to us the Scriptures." The manner was simple, clear, and cogent. Two or three things about Christ's method of communing with these disciples are worth a little attention. 1. It was sympathetic. He strikes a chord in their troubled hearts that vibrates at the touch of His matchless sympathy. 2. It was instructive. Seek instruction rather than rapture. 3. This talk by the way was animating. Not only did it relieve their gloom and sadness, it cheered, revived, and filled them with ardent joy, "for they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way?" III. THE REST AND THE REVELATION WHICH AWAITED THE DISCIPLES AT THE END OF THE WAY. 1. A triumphant joy. 2. An intelligent faith in Him as the Redeemer of Israel. 3. The disclosure of Christ to those two disciples filled their hearts with confident hope. (*J. T. Higgins.*)

The disclosure at Emmaus.—I. We note, in the beginning, THE NATURALNESS OF A POSTURE OF MIND AKIN TO DOUBT AND CONFUSION. Heavy providences bear us down under them. Sudden, almost inexplicable, depressions settle upon our souls. The devil watches always for these opportunities, and plies us with adroit attack. II. Next, we see here THE POSITIVE VALUE OF FRATERNAL CONFERENCE AND EXCHANGE OF VIEWS. The larger part of our seasons of hypochondria are to be dispersed by a frank conversation with sympathetic friends in relation to the matters of supreme interest to us both. III. THE ACTUAL NEARNESS OF CHRIST

ALWAYS, TO THOSE WHO NEED HIM. Would it alarm us, if we suddenly discovered we had been talking with Him in person, instead of some boon companion we had met in our freedom? IV. Then we have a fine lesson concerning THE DIVINE REMEDY FOR ALL DOUBTS AS TO OUR SAVIOUR AND OUR SALVATION. These bewildered disciples are led directly to the Divine Word (see verses 25-27). V. In the next place, we may note here the PERSONAL INTEREST JESUS HAS IN EVERY TRUE BELIEVER WHO IS IN NEED OF HIS HELP. A whole afternoon did our Lord give of those forty days He had left to these disciples who were not known enough even to be described. Lot in life has nothing to do with the estimate which the Saviour forms of His followers. He came with those modest brethren to their destination. VI. We have now a lesson from the story which might give a help to any Christian at the communion table; THE REAL JOY IN EVERY SPIRITUAL FEAST IS TO HAVE THE LORD JESUS CHRIST DISCLOSED TO US. "Jesus has kept coming again ever since He went away." VII. A single lesson more remains: we see THAT THE FIRST DELIGHTED IMPULSE OF A SOUL, REJOICING AT HAVING FOUND JESUS, IS TO GO AND TELL OTHERS OF HIS PRESENCE AT THE FEAST (see verses 32-35). These happy disciples could not wait even till morning. The Lord had vanished, but His argument remained; "while they were musing the fire burned." Now they began to remember peculiar experiences along the way. Oftentimes a new disclosure of Christ's presence turns the believer back upon hours in which he now sees the Holy Spirit was dealing with him; why did he not recognize it sooner? Memories of communions are always precious, if the joy has remained. Life gathers a fresh impulse from the disclosure. We are sure that walk out to Emmaus with Jesus in companionship was wonderfully sweet; but the walk in back again over the same path was not without comfort. Every stone and bush would make them think of Him. (C. S. Robinson, D.D.) *Easter Monday:—*

I. NOTICE THE CHARACTERS BROUGHT TO VIEW. Two men. Devout Jews. Disciples of Jesus. They were in great perplexity and trouble of heart. Their faith had received a blow under which it greatly staggered. They reasoned the case with each other; but reason was too weak an instrument to give them relief. Mere earthly reason, when it comes to matters of faith and salvation, can do very little for us. They were moving through one of the most interesting and beautiful districts. Their way from Jerusalem to Emmaus lay by the tombs of the ancient Judges, by the old dwelling-place of Samuel, and through mountainous scenery as attractive as any in the Holy Land. But no charms of nature, however intermingled with sacred story, could soothe the trouble that was upon their souls. Those scenes of blood and murder which had been enacted at Jerusalem, and the sore disappointment which those scenes had entailed upon their most precious hopes, followed them, and clung to them, in spite of all the pleasant things around them. Nature, in all its loveliness, cannot supply the place of Christ, or give comfort to the soul that has lost Him. Yet the Saviour was with them, all unknown to themselves. In the form of a common traveller, journeying the same way, and after the same manner with themselves, He overtook them, and made one in their little company. There are many ways in which He comes to His people. He comes to them sometimes in the form of a plain gardener, or a servant. He comes sometimes in the form of a fellow-traveller. He comes sometimes in the form of a poor beggar. But, in some shape or other, He is never far from those who are in spiritual earnest, and devoutly struggling for the light. In our earthly way of looking at things, we do not always recognize the presence of our Saviour, and our eyes are holden that we do not know Him. It is the fault of our feeble faith, that we only think of Christ as far away—as hidden in the grave—or in some remote world to which the grave is the mysterious doorway. Hence so much of our trouble and doubtfulness. But it is an erroneous way of thinking of Him. He is not in the grave. He is not far off in some realm which separates Him for ever from all connection with this present world. He is risen. He is not far from every one of us. Wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, there He is. He is in the city, and He is in the country. He is in the garden among the flowers, and He is in the dusty highway. He is in our assemblies for devotion, and He journeys with us in our travels. He is with us, and speaking to us, even when we do not at all suspect that it is He. **II. NOTICE HOW THE RISEN JESUS DEALS WITH THESE PERPLEXED AND BORROWING ONES.** 1. He "drew near, and went with them." It is the will of our gracious Saviour to be near us, and to have us near Him. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities" (Heb. iv. 15). When grief and trouble are upon His disciples, He takes it to heart, and is drawn towards them in loving sympathy. But, in addition to their

mental troubles, these pilgrims were earnestly engaged with each other, trying to solve and master them. Earnestness of spirit is never unnoticed in heaven. 2. He questioned them as to their troubles and sadness. "He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk? and why are ye sad? It was a call to review the character of their trouble, as the basis for the formation of a better judgment. They had not looked at matters rightly. They had not gone deep enough into the facts for the proper conclusions. The cure for their disturbance was in the very things that disturbed them, if they would only learn to see them in their true aspects and relations. Did Christian people but view their anxieties aright, they would find in them cause for joy rather than discomfiture. Desponding soul, Jesus asks thee, Why art thou sad? Canst thou give Him a reason for thy disheartenment at what has happened? Review thy ground, and come to a better mind. 3. Having drawn out their story, He directed them to the Bible. After all, there is nothing that can so settle, satisfy, and comfort our troubled hearts and anxious doubts, as the records of the holy prophets. There the portrait of the Christ is fully drawn, and all that concerneth Him is amply disclosed. From them these disciples might have fortified themselves against all such sorrowful perplexities over their Master's death. The very first promise that was made of Him, told of a suffering as well as a triumphing Saviour. He was to be bruised, as well as to bruise. All the appointments of the law pointed to death and bloodshedding as the only possible way of remission of sins or recovery from condemnation. Precious indeed are these blessed Scriptures. Herein is light which giveth understanding to the simple, and which maketh wise unto salvation. Herein is balm for the troubled heart more than Gilead can furnish. Are we shaken in faith, and disturbed in our hopes? Jesus directs us to the Bible. 4. And having set them right in their reading of the Scriptures, the Saviour yielded to their entreaties, entered with them into their home, and made Himself known to them in the breaking of bread. Those who love the truth will be kindly disposed toward those who teach it; and those who admit Christ into their hearts will be anxious also to have Him abide in their homes. And those who in grateful consideration of His kindness receive Him into their houses, though they should not yet know with whom they are dealing, will soon have Him disclosed to them in all the certainties of an unmistakable faith. (*J. A. Seiss, D.D.*)

The walk to Emmaus.—I. THE SORROWS AND DOUBTS OF THE TWO DISCIPLES. II. THE SORROWS AND DOUBTS OF THE DISCIPLES ARE MET BY A DIVINE EXPLANATION. 1. He first rebukes their spiritual ignorance and unwillingness to believe. 2. They were, without being aware of it, mourning over the very things which formed Christ's peculiar glory and their own redemption. 3. To show this, He began at Moses, and explained in regular succession what the prophets had foretold concerning Himself. III. THE SORROWS AND DOUBTS OF THE DISCIPLES WERE LOST IN THE SUPREME JOY OF THE RISEN JESUS FULLY REVEALED. LESSONS: 1. This narrative is an irrefragable proof of the reality of our Lord's resurrection. He was not an apparition nor a subjective vision. 2. God is ever near us, if we only had the spiritual vision to discern His presence. 3. To talk of Jesus and the things of the kingdom, is wise. At such seasons He draws near, and by His Spirit communes with us until our hearts burn with new hopes, and our eyes are filled with a revelation of His presence. 4. The Old Testament prophecies, inclusive of everything relating to Christ's Church, are, according to His own showing, an integral part of the Scriptures. 5. Failure to believe the Scriptures was the cause of the disciples' blindness and sorrows. 6. How precious is a Christian's company. (*T. S. Doolittle, D.D.*)

The walk to Emmaus.—I. TWO REPRESENTATIVE DISCIPLES. 1. They were on a journey. So are we all. 2. They were in earnest conversation. (1) To converse is natural. (2) Our conversation should be wise, spiritual, helpful. 3. They were full of sadness. (1) Their sadness was natural. (a) Bright hopes were blasted. (b) An awful tragedy had been enacted. (2) But their sadness was sinful. (a) Because it arose from their unbelief in the testimony of the prophets. (b) Because it arose from their unbelief in the testimony of Christ Himself. (c) Yet how common is such unbelief among Christians? II. CHRIST IN HIS REPRESENTATIVE CHARACTER. 1. As ever near His sorrowing disciples. 2. As ever entering into their experience. 3. As rebuking their unbelief. 4. As the opener up of the Scriptures. (1) Christ ever honours the Scriptures. (2) Christ ever testifies to the genuineness and inspiration of the Scriptures. (3) Christ ever teaches that He Himself is the central subject of the Scriptures. 5. As unexpectedly revealing Himself. (1) While their hearts were full of doubts, "their eyes were holden that

they should not know Him.' (2) The expounding of the Scripture restored them to a believing condition. (3) Their quickened faith resulted in hearts that burned. (4) Hearts that burn alone can see Jesus to know Him. (D. C. Hughes, M.A.)

The walk to Emmaus:—I. THIS WALK TO EMMAUS SUGGESTS THE STRANGE MINGLING OF UNBELIEF AND FAITH IN THE SAME BREAD. 1. The fact of their unbelief. 2. The unreasonableness of their unbelief. 3. The reality of their faith. II. THIS WALK TO EMMAUS SUGGESTS THE LORD'S INTEREST IN HIS PERPLEXED BUT INQUIRING DISCIPLES. III. THIS WALK TO EMMAUS SUGGESTS THE CHARACTER OF THE TRUE INQUIRER, THOUGH PERPLEXED. 1. He is ever interested in those who unfold the Scriptures. 2. He is ever open to conviction. 3. His heart is ever stirred by the truth. 4. When he learns the truth, he is ever anxious to proclaim it to others. Lessons: 1. We learn that unbelief arises from the heart, and is an evidence of unwisdom. 2. That unbelief not only brings trouble to the heart, but blindness to the mind. 3. That perplexities are not solved by reasoning, but by the study of God's Word. 4. If our Lord and His apostles found in Moses and the prophets evidences of His Messiahship, why may not we? (*Ibid.*)

The journey to Emmaus:—After He has comforted the weeping, disconsolate Magdalene, and graciously restored the fallen Peter, He hastens to lay hold of those sad wanderers who have ignorantly turned away from where they might have found light and consolation. The first word He addressed to them, after He had drawn out their thoughts and feelings by two questions which He needed not to ask, but which it was well they should answer, was a word of rebuke—"O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." Thus do chiding and reproof oftentimes precede the most gracious manifestations. Our faults must be corrected before any real and lasting comfort can be administered. To remove all discomfort and distress, without touching the evil state of mind from which they spring, would be like relieving the patient's pain at the expense of aggravating his disease; it would be to countenance and encourage us in the wrong thoughts and feelings which it behoves us to abandon. Not thus does the Great Physician deal with the souls whom He loves. Injudicious earthly teachers may try to minister relief to distempered minds, by simply soothing their sorrows without correcting their faults, making them believe that all their troubles spring from something without themselves which will shortly be put right, instead of leading them to look within that they may correct what is wrong there; pleasing them with flattery when they should first pain them by rebuke; and thus, for the sake of yielding them a little momentary pleasure, inflicting on them a permanent injury. Not so the Saviour. How prone we are all to close our eyes to the things which we dislike—to believe only in those we like! The disciples were ready enough to listen to what seemed to justify their hopes of a coming kingdom: when He spoke of His sufferings they were equally ready to say, "Be it far from Thee, Lord." Whatever we may think of the manner in which the Old Testament writers were inspired—a question on which bold theorising is but a bold mistake, the conduct of our Lord on this occasion places the fact of their inspiration beyond all dispute among those who recognize His authority. "Abide with us," they said, "for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent." The reason of this request was the fascination of His speech—the effect it had produced on them in dispelling their doubts, reviving their drooping hopes, and quickening their languid affections. Such is the invariable consequence of converse with the Saviour. Such experience naturally awakens the desire that the fellowship may be prolonged. From souls who thus earnestly seek Him the Saviour will not withhold His gracious presence. "He went in to tarry with" these disciples, and "sat at meat with them"; thus condescending not only to become their guest, but to place Himself so much on an equality with them, as to sit at the same table and partake of the same meal. Be this as it may, this portion of the narrative is beautifully representative of what often takes place in the experience of believers. Where the Saviour's presence is earnestly desired and prayed for, He not only grants the request, but enters into more intimate fellowship with the longing soul. But delightful as fellowship with Christ is to the truly Christian soul, the passage may very well remind us that there is something for us to do besides gratifying our desire, even for the highest spiritual enjoyment. Peter, on the Mount of Transfiguration, though he said, "It is good for us to be here," was not permitted to build tabernacles as he desired, because at the foot of the mountain there were distresses to be relieved. The two disciples, though they would fain prolong their interview with the Lord, must, just when their gratification is at the highest, be deprived of His presence, and return to Jerusalem to share their

joy with others. And so we, sometimes, when we might greatly prefer quiet meditation and devotion to active service, must nevertheless, because the world needs our ministrations, go forth from communion with our Master to do the Master's work. I cannot conclude without calling attention to that which appears so conspicuously throughout the whole of the narrative—the marvellous condescension of our Lord. These are but weak disciples when He finds them—foolish, slow of heart to understand the Scriptures—their faith much clouded, though it does not relinquish its hold of Him. And how He condescends to their weakness, suits His instruction to their case, gradually leads them to a full preception of the truth and apprehension of Himself. Tenderly He deals with them, not breaking the bruised reed, nor quenching the smoking flax; but gathering the lambs in His arms, and carrying them in His bosom. (*W. Landels.*)

*Communion with Christ:—I. THIS CONVERSATION SHOWS WHAT LIFE WOULD BE WITHOUT CHRIST. 1. When we fail to discern the presence of Christ our hearts are overwhelmed with grief. 2. When we fail to discern the presence of Christ our minds are clouded with doubt. II. THIS CONVERSATION SHOWS WHAT LIFE MAY BE WITH CHRIST. 1. We should never forget that Christ is near to His disciples in all their sorrow. 2. We should never forget that Christ instructs His disciples in all their sorrows. III. THIS CONVERSATION SHOWS WHAT LIFE SHOULD BE FOR CHRIST. 1. What did these men do? "They rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem." It was night, and the distance considerable, but they went immediately to proclaim the Saviour's resurrection. If we have any word to speak, or any work to do for Christ, let us do it at once; for time is short, and life is uncertain. 2. What did these men find? "And found the eleven gathered together." Men are drawn together by common sympathies and common beliefs. Why were they together? For counsel and prayer. Why together at midnight? For secrecy and security. Seasons of personal danger should be seasons of united communion with God. 3. What did these men hear? "The Lord hath risen indeed." What joyful tidings these must have been! They not only heard of Christ's resurrection from others, but they had seen Him themselves. This is love's reward. The givers were receivers. Thus experience answers experience in the Divine life. 4. What did these men say? "Told what things were done in the way," &c. Personal testimony to the fact of Christ's resurrection. If Christ has appeared to you, rise up at once, and acknowledge Him before His people. It will cheer them, and confirm you. (*J. T. Woodhouse.*)*

*The absent Lord appears:—I. THOUGH JESUS BE ABSENT, HIS DISCIPLES MAKE HIM THEIR THEME. II. THE ABSENT JESUS COMES NEAR WHILE HIS DISCIPLES TALK OF HIM. Blessed sequel to their saintly converse. And so it is to-day. "Where two or three," &c. It was a tender superstition which our fathers held—that to speak much of the absent or the dead brings them near. And the beautiful fiction becomes blessed fact, when we refer it to Jesus. He is the true Mentor whom Homer ignorantly celebrated. We have but to think of Jesus, talk of Jesus, wish for Jesus—and He is by our side. (*A. A. Ramsey.*)*

Jesus near, but unrecognized:—I. We shall note, first, REASONS WHY, IN THE VERY PRESENCE OF THEIR MASTER, SAINTS MAY NOT KNOW THAT HE IS NEAR. The first reason, then, why these good men did not perceive the presence of their Master was that "their eyes were holden." There was a blinding cause in them. What was it? 1. By some mysterious operation, their eyes, which were able to see other things, were not able to detect the presence of their Master, but they thought Him to be some common traveller. Still we are permitted to say that in their case, and in the case of a great many disciples, eyes have been holden through sorrow. 2. Again, in their case, in addition to the mysterious operation which held their eyes, which we do not attempt to account for, we have no doubt their eyes were holden with unbelief. Had they been expecting to see Jesus, methinks they would have recognized Him. 3. Whatever may have been mysterious about the holding of the disciples' eyes, they were also somewhat holden by ignorance. They had failed to see what is plain enough in Scripture, that the Messiah must suffer, bleed, and die. At other times they may not see Him, because of something in the Master. Mark, as I have told you, says He appeared unto them "in another form." I suppose he means in a form in which they had not seen Him before. Perhaps you have only seen Jesus as your joy and consolation; under that aspect may you always see Him, but, remember, "He shall sit as a refiner; He shall purify the sons of Levi." When you are in the furnace, suffering affliction and trial and depression of spirit, the refiner is Christ, the same loving Christ in a new character. Hitherto you have seen Christ as breaking the bread of life to you, and giving you to drink of the water of life,

but you must yet learn that His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge the floor of your heart. He is not another Christ, but He puts on another aspect, and exercises another office. II. Secondly, let us speak of THE MANNERS OF THE SAINTS WHEN THEY ARE IN SUCH A CASE. When their Master is with them and they do not know Him, how do they conduct themselves? First, they are sad; because the presence of Christ, if Christ be unknown, is not comfortable, though it may be edifying. It may be for rebuke, as it was to them; but it certainly is not for consolation. For joy we must have a known Christ. Next, these disciples, though they did not know that their Master was there, conversed together—a good example for all Christians. Whether you are in the full joy of your faith or not, speak often one to another. He who is strong will help the weak brother; if two walk together, if one shall trip perhaps the other will not, and so he will have a hand to spare to support his friend. Even if both saints are unhappy, yet some good result will come from mutual sympathy. Note, again, that though they did not know their Master was there, yet they avowed their hopes concerning Him. I cannot commend all that they said, there was not much faith in it, but they did confess that they were followers of Jesus of Nazareth. "We trusted that it had been He which should deliver Israel. And, besides all this, to-day is the third day." And they went on to let out the secret that they belonged to His disciples. "Certain women of our company made us astonished." They were under a cloud and sad, but they were not so cowardly as to disown their connection with the Crucified. They still avowed their hope. And oh, beloved, when your comforts are at the lowest ebb, still cling to your Master. But, passing on—these poor people, though very sad, and without their Master as they thought, were very willing to bear rebukes. Although the word used by our Lord should not be rendered "fools," yet it sounds somewhat hard even to call them inconsiderate and thoughtless; but we do not discover any resentment on their part because they were so severely chided. Souls that really love Jesus do not grow angry when faithfully rebuked. And then, they were willing to learn. Never better pupils, never a better Teacher, never a better school book, never a better explanation. Again, notice that while the two were willing to learn, they also wished to retain the Teacher and His instruction, and to treat Him kindly too. They said, "Abide with us; the day is far spent." They had been benefited by Him, and therefore they wished to show their gratitude to Him. Have you learned so much that you are willing to learn more? And, once more, though they did not know that their Master was with them, they were well prepared to join in worship. Some have thought that the breaking of bread that night was only Christ's ordinary way of offering a blessing before meat; it does not seem so to me, because they had already eaten and were in the middle of the meal when He took the bread and blessed it. III. Lastly, let us try to set forth THE ACTIONS OF BELIEVERS WHEN THEY DISCOVER THEIR LORD. "Their eyes were opened, and they knew Him." What then? Well, first, they discovered that there had been all along in their hearts evidences of His presence. "Did not our hearts burn within us while He spake with us by the way?" This heavenly heartburn never comes to any but through the presence of the Lord Jesus. The next thing they did was to compare notes. The one said to the other, "Did not our hearts burn within us?" It is always a good thing for believers to communicate their returning enjoyment. Somehow we are rather chary as to speaking of our joys. Ought we to be so? Once again. These disciples, when they saw the Master, hastened to tell others about it. I notice that while they told of their Lord's appearing, they made mention of the ordinance which had been blest to them, for they especially said that He had been known to them in the breaking of bread. I like to see them mention that, for, though ordinances are nothing in themselves, and are not to be depended upon, they are blest to us. (C. H. Spurgeon.) Present, but unknown:—I. THE TIME WHEN THE WALK OCCURRED. 1. On the first of the forty days between resurrection and ascension. 2. Probably the longest period of intercourse with disciples between resurrection and ascension. II. THE NEW METHODS ADOPTED BY OUR LORD TO OPERATE ON THE MINDS ON THESE TWO MEN. He makes them first define their grief, and then state their belief. Here are two of the most instructive lessons in the Scriptures of the human soul as well as the Holy Scriptures. The first lesson is: measure your sorrow, see its nature and extent, and know exactly its bearings on your happiness. The second is: if you are in doubt and apprehensions, if you are tempted to distrust God and Christ, if scepticism or the worst horror of infidelity threaten your heart, go back to what you do assuredly believe. Find honest footing for yourselves. Rest on the great fundamentals that lie imbedded in the instincts, the granite substra-

tum of nature and the basis of all real characters. Let us learn from the walk toward Emmaus what Christ expects of us in hours of darkness and dismay, and then we may hope that, when we get to Emmaus, He will reveal His glory. (*A. A. Lipscomb, LL.D.*) *Jesus drawing near*:—"He drew very near," solemnly uttered a youthful believer within a few hours of death. "Who drew near?" anxiously inquired a friend who was present, fearful to hear her pronounce the word "death." "Jesus," she replied, with an unutterable earnestness of expression. "I felt just now as if He stood close beside me." Soon after she was asked by her sister if she would like her to pray with her. She gladly assented. But while she prayed the countenance of the dying one changed, the expression of supplication was succeeded by one of adoring contemplation—it would have been rapture but for its perfect calm. A kind of glow suffused her features, then faded gradually away, and before that prayer was ended she was gone. Her "amen," to it was her first hallelujah in heaven. Jesus had "come again" and received her unto Himself. (*Clerical Library.*)

Emmaus:—I. CHRIST HIMSELF THE THEME OF HIS DISCIPLES' CONVERSATION. II. CHRIST HIMSELF THE EXPOSITOR OF HIS OWN SUFFERINGS. III. CHRIST HIMSELF THE GUEST OF HIS OWN DISCIPLES. IV. CHRIST HIMSELF THE OCCASION OF HIS OWN RECOGNITION. Practical lessons: 1. There is no teacher like Christ. 2. There is no friend like Christ. (*J. R. Thomson.*) *The walk to Emmaus*:—It may be asked, Why should not our Lord have declared Himself at once to these burdened friends? Why not with one word have assured them, as He did faithful Mary in the garden? The answer is suggestive. In them the stupendous miracle of the resurrection was to be established, not by one appearance, but by many; not by evidence of one kind, but of all kinds. Each fresh proof of the fact was to be a separate link in a chain of proofs, on which ages to come might hang their faith. The particular link to be wrought and welded on the road to Emmaus was the complete identity of the slain Jesus of Nazareth with the Messiah of Moses and Daniel, of David, Isaiah, and Malachi. Had He too soon revealed His personality to these oppressed disciples, they would have been unfitted, by their great joy, to receive this lesson and to witness its truth. But now they take it in eagerly. Their ears thirst for knowledge. Such was the sacred drama of the Emmaus road, and from the whole story we may instruct and comfort ourselves in several ways: 1. It is good for disciples to be together. Every appearance of the Lord immediately after His resurrection, save one, was made to disciples in groups. 2. The Lord may be much nearer to doubting disciples than they dream. 3. The source of much modern doubt about Christ is ignorance of the Scriptures as a whole. The real cure of doubt, therefore, lies in a more comprehensive study of the Word of God, and the only study that can be a perfect cure is that which shall "begin with Moses," and end with the Apocalypse. (*J. B. Clark.*) *The hidden Christ*:—No more picturesque and beautiful scene is depicted in the life of Christ, than this walk, after His resurrection, out to Emmaus. The innocent unconsciousness of the disciples pleases us like a scene in a drama. That trait, too, in the Lord, which led Him to keep in disguise, is peculiarly interesting. It interprets much of the Divine nature. One would have looked, according to the ordinary ideas of the Divine mind, and of its methods, for an open and prompt disclosure of Himself. But no. It was pleasant to Him, for some reason, to be with His disciples, to love them, to perceive their embarrassments, to instruct them, without letting them know that He was there. It was not deception. It was only a permitting them to have their own notions of Him undisturbed, while He exercised the full mission of love. This cannot be an unintended disclosure of the Divine nature. I will not call it mystic; and still less will I call it secretive; but there is a love of non-disclosure of personality during the operation of merciful grace, which has illustration in various other parts of the Gospel. One cannot but see that the Lord carried Himself to them just as in nature Divine providence is always carrying itself. Mercies move with wide-spread benefaction; yet without interpreting themselves. Nature is blessing without saying, "I bless." Messages are coming through the air, and through Divine providence, from God; and yet, they do not say "God." God is present in a silent way always. A certain hidden element, or hiding element, there is in the Divine mind, God's blessings steal into life noiselessly. They are neither self-proclaiming, nor even self-announcing. I. THE LORD'S PRESENCE IN UNPERCEIVED WAYS IN THE DAILY WANTS OF HIS PEOPLE. He is to be found wherever the soul is ready to receive Him. In some tender moment, amidst cares and toils and sorrows, often there starts up the thought of the Divine presence with such majesty and beauty as a thousand sabbaths could

not shadow forth in the ordinary experience of Christians. Though they did not see the Saviour, yet they saw His messengers—His blessed angels. Travellers over wide spaces that are unpopulous, hide their food in what are called caches, that, returning, they may have it at fit and appropriate points for their necessities. God fills the world with these spots of hidden food; and we meet Him and His mercies not alone in appointed places, in houses of entertainment, but in the wilderness—everywhere. Christ may be found at the well, if you come there to draw. Christ may be found at the receipt of custom, where Matthew found Him. Christ may be found behind the bier, where the widow found Him. Christ may be found on the sea, where the disciples found Him when they were fishing. He is moving with world-filling presence everywhere. But notably we may mention that God comes to His people in an undisclosed and unrecognized form in the hours of their dependency, as in the text. Or, to put it in other words, that which seems to us to be a cloud and darkness, is, after all, but the garment in the midst of which Christ is walking. All right occupations likewise, all duties, all daily fidelities, bring along with them a Divine presence. We are never alone. We are never doing things that are merely secular, if we know how to make them Divine. The most menial callings, routine occupations, things not agreeable in themselves, but necessary, and things of duty, all of them have or may have with them a Christ.

II. THE FULL PRIVILEGE OF THE SOUL IN GOD'S PRESENCE AND PROVIDENCE DISCERNED WHEN THE GIFT IS VANISHING AWAY. "Man never is, but always to be blessed," has become a motto. Our joys are seldom with us. They are either remembered or they are anticipated. When we come where they are, how few of us there are that are soundly happy; how few there are that are full of joy and know it. How few there are that have a power in them of blessing, in any hour or in any day, or still less, series of days! How few there are that can pluck from fortune, or from providence, or from Divine grace itself, fruits that shall be sweet to the taste while they are walking along the road of life! It is trite, that, "Men do not know how to value health till they lose it." It is the same with wealth. It is so of youth and age. For we take our measures as little children take snowflakes to examine them, and they are gone. They dissolve in the looking at them. Especially is this true of moral things—of moral treasures. Hours of religious peace, hours of spiritual delight, never seem so precious to us, hours of religious duty are never so dear to us, while we have them; and they are as it were, in their ministration, as when they are gone. In our religious life we are finding fault with our fare. In like manner is it in respect to our privileges in being workers together with God. While we have the privileges, how little we esteem them! and how much, often, we reluctantly and begrudge both time and strength! Now it is an exceeding privilege for any one to be a worker together with Christ in the work of the Lord in this world. And so is it with the sanctuary. So is it with the blessings of the soul itself. Our inward thoughts, our inward strifes and resolutions, our very tears, our prayers, all that sacred history of the soul that is inherited upon earth, but is more heroic and more wonderful than the history of the battle-field or the history of empires—that lore unexpressed, that literature of eternity, the soul's inward life—at the time how little is there to us in it! how little of Christ! Ah! what a pity, my Christian brethren, it is that Christ should vanish out of sight just at the moment when He discloses Himself! What a pity it is that just as our mercies are going beyond our reach, they should for the first time seem to be mercies! In view of these simple remarks, may you not derive a motive for the better use of the present in all the relations of your life than you have been accustomed to? And ought we not, bearing this in mind, to make more of one another; more of our children; more of our parents; more of our brothers and sisters; more of our neighbours; more of the Church; more of the Bible-class; more of the Sabbath-school; more of all works by which we cleanse the morals of men, and raise up the ignorant, and prosper those that are unfortunate? May not life be filled fuller of blessings, if only we know how to redeem the time, and appreciate the opportunity to perceive the God that is near us? (*H. W. Beecher.*) *The walk to Emmaus*:—I. And, first—the first truth taught us by narrative—see here the importance of searching and understanding the Scriptures, and how a neglected or perverted Bible will bring sin and sorrow into the soul. II. As these two disciples pursue their melancholy journey—the deepening shadows of evening a feeble type of the gloom gathering on their souls—we have seen a third join them. LET US NOW TURN OUR ATTENTION TO THIS STRANGER. His fellow-travellers knew Him not, but we know Him. I have said that we know not the name of one of

these disciples. But the name of this wayfaring man we know. He is "The Wonderful." Wonderful was He in the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. Wonderful was He in His deep humiliation. But He is, above all, wonderful now, as He stands upon the earth, a mighty conqueror returned from His expedition into the territories of the King of Terrors—having "by death destroyed death," and become the resurrection and the life. He might have entered the city in regal pomp and equipage, with a retinue of angelic legions; but He prefers to enter these desolate hearts, and to awaken festive joy and triumphal acclamations there. What I desire to mark in the conduct of the Redeemer is the manner in which He makes himself known to these two disciples. For observe, my brethren, in the first place, that He does not at once reveal Himself to them; and why not? For reasons most obvious. They had, as yet, no idea of the atonement. When He foretold His crucifixion, declaring that it was necessary, Peter was indignant, and said, "Be it far from Thee, Lord, this shall not be unto Thee." Had He not instructed them before showing Himself, they would have been wholly unprepared rightly to welcome Him; they would, perhaps, like the apostles, have been "terrified and affrighted, supposing they had seen a spirit." It is certain they could not have been filled with the intelligent joy which sprang up in their souls when He was made known to them. In the next place, see how He prepares them for the manifestation He is about to make. It is by opening the Scriptures to them. He will not let their faith rest on the testimony of men or of angels. Convincing as was the vision on Mount Tabor, Peter, who was there and beheld the glorified Jesus, says, "We have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed." And it is to this sure word that Jesus turns the minds of these disciples. He magnifies "His word above all His name." He teaches them that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. III. WHAT IS THE EFFECT OF THIS INTERVIEW UPON THESE TWO DISCIPLES? Their souls are first consoled, then warmed, then heated. While Jesus is speaking the fire kindles; His words fall upon train after train of memory and hope and love, until everything is in a glow, and their hearts are burning within them. A burning heart! what a noble expression; there is something contagious in the very words; we cannot utter them without feeling a sacred ardour in our own hearts. Do you ask me what emotions burned in the hearts of these disciples? I answer, first, love. In the whole account of the Saviour's resurrection, we see the difference between the nature of women and of men. The former are less suspicious, more prompt, unhesitating, unquestioning in their confidence; and more true in their affection. Hence Jesus appeared first to women. It is to love that Jesus hastens to manifest Himself, and during the three days between the Saviour's crucifixion and resurrection it was only in the hearts of women that love would know no abatement. These disciples, however, had never ceased to love. To me the very ground of their unbelief is a tender proof of their affection. "Him they saw not"—had they but seen Him; they saw a vision of angels, but saw ye Him whom our souls love? No, "Him they saw not"; and what if they saw thousands of angels, what if all the angels of heaven should appear, they cannot console us for our bereavement. They still loved, but their hearts had been crushed by such a blow. The fire was almost extinguished; it is now fanned; the dying embers begin to glow, the smoking flax blazes up. They know not the stranger, but He speaks to them of One dearer to them than life; how much sweeter the memory of Him than the presence of all besides! Do you ask me what emotions burned in the hearts of these disciples? I answer, joy. "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart." There is vouchsafed to them now a foretaste of the Pentecostal fire. Their hearts burn within them, burn with joy. In a word, and not to dwell too long upon this topic, the hearts of these disciples burned, not only with love and joy, but with the strangest, sweetest surprise. Their astonishment and rapture must have been overpowering an hour later, when "their eyes were opened and they knew Him, and He vanished out of their sight." What a moment that! What ages crowded into that moment! IV. In finishing this discourse, LET US EXTRACT FROM THIS HISTORY TWO LESSONS, and let the first be, The duty of living by faith, not by sight. When we open the sacred Volume we find that to faith nothing is impossible; but where is this omnipotent grace? Yet this entire narrative—the Saviour's rebuke of these disciples—the manner in which He instructs them—His sudden vanishing—all teaches us that it is not by the senses, but by faith in revealed truth that we are to walk. He appears to convince them of His resurrection, and to assure them of

His constant care and faithfulness. He disappears, to teach that, though they have known Him after the flesh, henceforth they are only to know Him and commune with Him spiritually. Another lesson. Let us seek burning hearts. Faith is a great word; but there is a greater, more imperial word, it is Love. The life of love is a truer, higher life than that of faith; its strength failed not amidst all the unbelief of these disciples; and it will be perpetuated and perfected in heaven, when faith shall cease for ever. Let us seek burning hearts. Intellect is good, and imagination is good; but a heart on fire, a heart inflamed with love, is best of all. (*R. Fuller, D.D.*) What manner of communications are these?—*Easter consolations*:—The Lord's question was the language, not of reproof, but of sympathy. Something like reproof came later on: but as yet He can think only of their sadness. Their sadness was written, so the original word implies, in their countenances: but He, of course, saw deeper. And whether the allusion to the sadness formed part of His question, or belongs, as is probable, to the evangelist's description, does not really matter: the drift of the early part of His question was plain enough. I. WHAT WAS AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SADNESS OF THE TWO DISCIPLES? 1. It was, first of all, the sadness of a bereavement. They had been with Jesus, we know not how long; they had seen and heard Him: He had conquered a great place in their hearts. They had seen Him arrested, insulted, crucified, dead, buried. So far their sadness was that of the Magdalene, when she asked the supposed gardener where they had laid the sacred body. We most of us know something of the heartache of a great bereavement. 2. But, then, secondly, the sadness of the disciples was also caused by mental perplexity. Here, as elsewhere in the Gospels, we see the different bearing of men and women in the hour of sorrow. A woman is most distressed when her heart has lost its accustomed object. A man is by no means insensible to this source of sorrow; but he commonly feels a distress, which a woman does not feel, at least equally, when his intelligence, his sense of truth, is perplexed. 3. Once more, theirs was the sadness of a forfeited object in life, of a shattered career. They had, as they thought, given themselves to Jesus, to His cause and work, for good and all. They had embarked all the energy and resolve of life in that service, in that companionship, so full, as it seemed, of coming blessing and triumph: when lo! as it appeared, all had collapsed. II. IN OUR MODERN WORLD ARE TO BE SEEN, NOT SELDOM, DISCIPLES OF CHRIST IN NAME, DOWNCAST AND SADDENED, WHO ARE LEAVING JERUSALEM, AS IF ON THE POINT OF GIVING HIM UP. And He, as of old, joins them in "another form," so that their eyes are holden, and they do not know Him. He comes to them in His Church, which is in their eyes only a human institution; or in His Scriptures, which seem to them but a human literature; or in His Sacraments, in which they can discern nothing more than outward ceremonies. Yet He has a question to put to them, and a word of comfort to address to them, if they will but listen. For they are sad; sad for nearly the same reasons as were the two disciples on the Emmaus road. 1. First of all, there is the sadness of mental perplexity. The understanding has its fashions as well as the heart; its fashions of distress as well as its fashions of enjoyment. In our day, many men, who have not wholly renounced the name of Christ, are oppressed by what they call, not unreasonably, the mystery of existence. They see around them a world of nature, and a human world too. Each in a thousand ways creates perplexity and disappointment. Whence comes the natural world? If we lose sight of what faith teaches as to the creation of all things out of nothing by God, all is at once wrapped in darkness. Our risen Lord offers us the true solution. 2. Next, there is the sadness of the conscience. Where distinct acts of wrong-doing are not constantly and vividly present to the memory, there is a moral cloud brooding over the soul, from whose shadow escape is rarely possible. Our risen Lord reveals Himself to those who are weighed down by sin, as pardoning and blotting it out. He bare our sins in His own body on the tree; and it is the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanses us from all sin. But what is it that gives His death this power? It is that the worth and merits of His Person are incalculable, since He is the everlasting Son of God. And what is the proof of this which He Himself offered to His disciples and to the world? It is His resurrection from the dead. 3. Thirdly, there is that sadness of the soul which arises from the want of an object in life; an object to be grasped by the affections, to be aimed at by the will. This is a kind of melancholy which is common enough among persons who have all the advantages which money and position can secure: they do not know what to do with themselves. They devote themselves to expedients for diminishing the lassitude of existence; they apply first to this excitement, then to that: they spend their lives

in trying to "kill time." What a disclosure of the hopeless misuse of life lies in that expression, "killing time"! To persons who are thus living without an object, Christ our Lord appears, once it may be at least; to teach them that there is something worth living for; the known will of the eternal God. (*Canon Liddon.*)

Our Lord's question:—1. This inquiry may be regarded as an instance of our Lord's tenderness and compassion towards His disciples. 2. Our Lord's question was an indication of His authority. He speaks not only as a friend, but as their Lord and Saviour. 3. The question might be proposed in order to teach both them and others the propriety of frequently putting a similar inquiry to themselves. 1. Is the general tenor of our conversation light and indifferent, or is it serious and edifying? 2. Does our conversation never border upon profaneness, even while it is free from the grosser expressions of it? 3. Is our conversation seasoned with salt, so as to minister edification to the hearers? 4. Are we careful as to the manner of our conversation, as well as to the matter of it; to see that the spirit of it corresponds with the subject of discourse? As spiritual things can only be spiritually discerned, so they can be communicated only by such as are spiritually minded. When our tongues are fluent, are our hearts warm and lively? In order that our conversation may be as becometh the gospel of Christ, let us observe the following directions: 1. Get a good treasure in your hearts, and let them be well stored with Divine truth; for it is out of this that the good householder bringeth forth good things. If the truth dwell in us richly in all wisdom, it will be like a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life. 2. Meditate much upon Divine subjects. "Whilst I was musing," says David, "the fire burned." What God communicates to us by our thoughts, we shall be ready to communicate to others in our words. 3. Seek Divine direction, and say with the Psalmist, "Open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise." If we were as full of matter as Elihu, yet what we utter would not tend to the glory of God, unless we are under the influence of His Holy Spirit (Psa. li. 15; Ephes. v. 18, 19). 4. Carefully avoid whatever might prove an impediment to spiritual and edifying conversation. Shun carnal company, disregard the reproaches of ignorant and wicked men, and seek the society of experimental Christians. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed" (Prov. xiii. 20; Hos. xiv. 9). (*B. Beddome, M.A.*)

A wise method of dealing with mourners:—Observe that, when the Saviour did come to these mourning ones, He acted very wisely towards them. He did not at once begin by saying, "I know why you are sad." No; He waited for them to speak, and in His patience drew forth from them the items and particulars of their trouble. You that deal with mourners, learn hence the way of wisdom. Do not talk too much yourselves. Let the swelling heart relieve itself. Jeremiah derives a measure of help from his own lamentations; even Job feels a little the better from pouring out his complaint. Those griefs which are silent run very deep, and drown the soul in misery. It is good to let sorrow have a tongue where sympathy hath an ear. Allow those who are seeking the Lord to tell you their difficulties: do not discourse much with them till they have done so. You will be the better able to deal with them, and they will be the better prepared to receive your words of cheer. Often, by facing the disease of sorrow the cure is half effected; for many doubts and fears vanish when described. Mystery gives a tooth to misery, and when that mystery is extracted by a clear description, the sharpness of the woe is over. Learn, then, ye who would be comforters, to let mourners hold forth their wound before you pour in the oil and wine. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Sad hearts:—Samuel Rutherford used to say, "I wonder many times that ever a child of God should have a sad heart, considering what the Lord is preparing for him." "When we shall come home, and enter into the possession of our Brother's fair kingdom, and when our heads shall find the weight of the eternal crown of glory, and when we shall look back to pains and suffering, then shall we see life and sorrow to be less than one step or stride from a prison to glory, and that our little inch of time-suffering is not worthy of our first night's welcome home to heaven." What things?—*Faith and fact:*—We naturally inquire, why did He ask this question? Not for His own sake, certainly. He not only knew, but was Himself the very subject of the narrative which He would obtain from their lips. "What things?" He asks. 1. Notice, first of all, the important circumstance that **HE CALLS THEIR ATTENTION TO FACTS.** It is an important circumstance. In the world, fact is our master; the truth is, after all, that which we need, and which controls us. No alchemy of logic, no splendour of fancy, can dissolve this. A man may live in an ideal world while he dreams, but waking brings him to solid earth, and to the slow

and real steps of daily life. The ultimate question for us, with reference to everything that demands our allegiance or assent, is this: Is it fact? Christianity must submit to this test, as all other things. Men fancy that it does not meet the requirement. The impression is widely prevalent. We may not stop to enumerate all the circumstances that lead to this impression, and yet a few may be referred to. First of all, those circumstances that have existed in connection with widely-spread revivals of religion have impressed upon the minds of many critical observers the conclusion that Christianity is all a romance, a dream. It may be impossible, by any mere human criteria, to discriminate between that which is passionall and earthly and that which is the work of the Spirit. God knoweth His own. It is not necessary for me to know whether my neighbour be a Christian; it is necessary for me to know that I am in communion with God. I am not bound to anatomize, dissect, and understand the working of his heart. I must deal with my own heart. A second circumstance that leads to this impression is the wide disparity between the profession of Christians and the manifestation of the power of the gospel in their lives. They cannot probe nor understand hidden life. Christianity seems unreal to them, because it is still and unobtrusive. A third cause of the impression is the persistent and earnest efforts, often reiterated, and especially prominent in our day, to do away with the historic basis of Christianity, and to construct a God out of human consciousness. They tell us that Christianity, after all, is only the religion of nature; it found a temporary manifestation here; but it existed before, and exists now, without revelation. That it is, indeed, the religion which nature demands, the outcry of the soul among all nations, civilized and barbaric, affirms; but that it is the religion that nature offers, the agony of the crucified, and the wail of the philosopher in the early ages, and the burden of those who in heathenism to-day cry out for light and confess their despair, all these deny. And yet we have those who placidly tell us that "religion is storax, and chlorine, and rosemary; a mountain air, and the silent song of the stars is it." A "mountain air," indeed, is such religion—very thin and very cold, where men soon gasp and die. Not thus did Christ and His apostles deal with the historic facts of Christianity. Here, you observe, He appeals to certain "things," upon the reality of which all His further dealings with these men, and all their hopes, are based. If these "things" have not occurred—if these "things" are not brought back vividly to their memory—if upon these "things" and their actuality He cannot build His subsequent words, they are deluded and defrauded, and their hopes are vain. The Gospels themselves are a compend of almost naked facts. Men now, as well as then, have to deal with concrete actualities in Christianity and its attendant evidences. Let me refer to two or three. You remember that famous answer to the king who demanded a visible miracle: "Your Majesty—the Jews." They are an anomaly, a perpetual miracle among the nations. Living in every country, yet having no country; intermixed in trade, yet not in blood, with other nations; preserving their distinct identity; a people with a memory and a hope, who look longingly and passionately back to empty Jerusalem, and claim it still as their own, though for hundreds of years they have been only permitted to touch the precious stones of the foundation of their temple. How shall we explain their presence in the world? How are we to account for the circumstances which environ them? I see upon them the brand of blood, and I remember how, at the transaction in Jerusalem, they said, "His blood be upon us." If this Bible gives the true history of the Jews, their condition is explained; if not, no theorist, no philosopher, no student of the science of history can explain it to me. I look to the Church of God—and, that I may be more specific, to a single Church—not to the Church universal, whose outlines are not clearly visible. I look to a single Church, as an existing institution, as a fact in the community. I put it alongside of earthly institutions—of those various organizations which men have framed for benevolent, social, and literary purposes. I point to the perpetuity of the individual Church. I come to individuals. It is sufficient if there be a single man who realizes, in any considerable degree, that which the gospel promises concerning the restoration of man to ideal perfectness. Read over that wonderful catalogue which Paul gives us of the Christian virtues, in the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Think of a man who is wise, and patient, and pure, and long-suffering, and charitable, and unenvious, and hopeful, and truthful—all the virtues that you can catalogue. But he tells you all this is built upon his companionship with Christ—upon the power of faith in actual redemption through Christ. Is not such a case a fact in life, and has not such a fact come within your reach? But take another case. Let it be a woman,

who, in her early womanhood, has given her heart, full of overflowing affection, to the one she trusted as her husband. He has deceived her. The world has dealt coldly with her. She has no longer a home or a husband, and her children look despair into her eyes as she turns to them. Yet there is a Book she clings to, and a sacred place of comfort; and the heart does not burst with agony. Alone! She declares she is not alone. That which no human sympathy could give—that which no human wisdom could teach—has been given and taught; strength has been put into that dismayed soul that makes her master of herself and of the world, notwithstanding its crushing power. Is not this a fact? And now I insist that these facts of which I have spoken have no significance, except they relate back to the facts to which these two men referred. The Lord's Supper, celebrated month by month, would have no explanation in facts, and no meaning as a ceremony, if it had not been an uninterrupted and perpetual memorial of an event that transpired. The Church has no foundation, if it be not founded on a real Christ and His authentic work among men. You will find that this monument of fact in the world rests upon Calvary; and Calvary itself thrusts its deep roots down to the earlier world. A solid basis of history is given us, such as no other religion has. Christianity gives us a historic record from the foundation of the world; and the New Testament is knit upon the Old as the subsequent history of the Church is knit upon it. Now I say that, if it be not literal truth, as these men reiterated it, that Christ was crucified; if it be not a fact, as revealed to them, that Christ is risen; if this basis for our faith be swept away, then the Church is dissolved like the fabric of a vision. I look back through the centuries to Paul, and hear him say: "If Christ be not risen, your hope is vain; ye are yet in your sins." I hear the army of martyrs cry: "Our blood is spilt in vain." I hear Luther lifting up his voice, crying: "I have deceived the nations, declaring that the just shall live by faith." But, admitting the need that these facts should exist, why does He ask these men to recount them? Why does He bid them go back again over those painful, thorny steps which they have just trod, and view again those agonizing scenes, and recall the mournful words? Before we answer the question, let us ask another: Why did these facts, so momentous, influence so few? Why was not Palestine convulsed morally as well as physically by the mighty earthquake when Christ died? "What things?" And, first of all, I recognize the fact that He would fix their attention upon the events that have been transpiring. We must distinguish between the mere open eye upon which passing objects paint their unnoticed outline, and the observing eye. We must distinguish between things which are just seen and then dismissed, and those which are retained by voluntary effort. These men are about to dismiss the subject of their thoughts. He calls it back. "What things?" They have fallen into mere musing, mere droning over the past. He brings them back to active memory and active study again. I. In the second place, He asks them, "What things?" that, in recounting, they may PERCEIVE THE RELATIONS OF THE EVENTS NARRATED. This is the greater part of knowledge. The mere mob of motley transactions that are flowing before us in the world, cannot, as such, be of service to us. He who would learn from nature, must study the order of nature—must bind up like with like, and study the dissimilarities of things that differ. He who will fairly study Christianity in the earth, must take the dominant facts of Christianity, and impartially weigh them in their relations. Christianity must be contrasted with error, in the whole breadth of each. Things that are alike must be noticed and marked out, as the algebraist strikes out, from the two sides of an equation, elements that correspond, retaining only those that differ. The accidental must be distinguished from the necessary, the formal from the essential; and so a broad and impartial vision must measure the outlines. Compare the godly man with the ungodly, and when you have sifted the two, and so reached radical character, how much is left in the godly man, and how much is left in the ungodly? These are the inquiries with which you have to do. In the history of Christianity as a force among nations—socially and governmentally—in the historic development of doctrine, and its bearings on life—in the history of individual Churches—it is the question for men fairly to consider: What are the facts, the residuary facts? So comes the "conclusion of the whole matter." These disciples had not forgotten, but remembered confusedly and in fragments. They must pass the whole in review, in broad vision see the relation of part with part, lest they lose the benefit of the lesson which has been given them. There are two difficulties in attempting fairly to weigh facts. One is, the disposition to prejudge—to test history by theory. These men had a theory. It was perfectly clear to

them. God had not given it to them; intuition had not disclosed it; but they had concluded it—they were sure that, when the Messiah should come, He would be a triumphant Saviour; that He would march boldly into Jerusalem, lay His hand upon the sceptre and throne, and the Roman power dissolve before Him. This had not been. They had seen Him hang pale and lifeless upon the cross, and consigned to the tomb stark and dead. How could He be the Messiah? The matter was disposed of in their minds. A second difficulty that lay in their way is a common one. With half glimpses, and a confused idea of facts, they had begun "reasoning together." This is almost instinctive. Men get two facts of a case, and presume a third; and, upon the two facts and a presumption, go to work to build a conclusion. Here is a surveyor who wishes to measure the height of yonder tree. He measures the base-line; he knows the tree is perpendicular, and so has a right-angle; now, he guesses at the angle from here to the top of the tree, and on these data seeks to find the height of the tree. Will he ever get it? Science offers to us two or three data; to these known, we add certain unknown quantities, counting them as also known, and so set off to map out the heavenly spaces. These men had a part only of the facts, and they had begun at once to draw general conclusions. There was a fairer way. They remembered Christ's words—they alluded to them. They remembered the event of the crucifixion, and that three days had transpired, and they had heard the words of the women, that He was gone from the tomb. Did they count this a mere vision of enthusiasts, who, by reason of their femininity, might be supposed to be peculiarly imaginative? Still, it was confirmed by their calmer brethren. So far as the testimony went, it was all in the direction of fulfilment of His word. It was no time to deny or surmise, but rather to hope and wait and watch. Philip said to Nathaniel, when he asked, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" "Come and see." So far as the facts you have seen go, do they point to the truth of Christianity? Do not pause at that point to argue, much less to deny, but, if you would have confirmation, "come and see." It is God's own method. Once more. It was NOT SUFFICIENT FOR THEM SIMPLY TO THINK OVER the facts—they must also SPEAK them. Now, this may at first seem strange to us; but consider how vital is the relation of human speech to the development of character, and to self-acquaintance. We see now the process by which Christ leads these men out of their bewilderment into perfect light. The facts were all accessible, but, though within reach, they were not grasped, and would soon have been swallowed up in forgetfulness. He calls up again these flitting forms and sets them in array; and beside them sets a prophecy uttered four hundred years before, and shows them how, item by item, it corresponds with these. He goes farther back, from Malachi to Isaiah, and from Isaiah to David, and from David to Moses. He sets a torchlight on every hill, until their wondering eyes look back along the pathway to the gateway of Eden, and they see the glowing words, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head"; "It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." They understand now the gigantic conflict which has transpired, and that from it the Messiah must come forth, "having trodden the wine-press alone," with garments blood-red, to lift His sceptre over a redeemed universe, His bruised heel upon the crushed head of the monster. Their hearts burn within them; they longed for the truth, and now, the truth being come to them, their hearts are aglow, and they constrain Him to abide with them. They have learned the lesson—their faith is confirmed. He is known to them, and vanishes from their sight. This method in the revelation of Himself to a soul, commends itself to reasonable men; proceeding from facts to conclusions—from the known to the unknown—from the natural to the supernatural. (*Jesse B. Thomas, D.D.*) But we trusted.—*A mistaken hope*.—I. THEIR PREVIOUS CONFIDENCE. 1. The object of that confidence. They had formed defective views as to the (1) needful atonement, and (2) attendant benefits. 2. The ground of that confidence. In part substantially and in part visionary. They were misled by prevailing misconceptions. II. THEIR PRESENT DESPONDENCY. 1. Its extent. Heart-felt dejection. 2. The occasion of it (see ver. 20). Lessons: 1. To shame our low distrust. The things we fear are for us (Rom. viii. 28). 2. To confirm our highest hope. Sufferings, death, and resurrection of Jesus established. (*F. Fitch, M.A.*) *Sunset sorrow and lost hopes*.—Here we have an illustration of men who had hoped great things, and God had disappointed them. But we learn that God had disappointed them by making His fulfilment larger than their hope. They hoped too little. It is so yet with many whom sunset sorrow overshadows. It is not easy for us to realize that the world of God is larger than our world. In ancient times the

imperfect knowledge of men reduced the world to a mere fraction of its actual size and contents. The entire globe rested on the shoulders of Atlas then; the Mediterranean was the "Great Sea"; the Straits of Gibraltar formed the world's end. But with the advance of knowledge the earth widened; Atlas lost the honour of being the supporter of the globe; an Atlantic was discovered beyond the pillars of Hercules at Gibraltar, stretching immeasurable and unknown towards the west. Religious geography has fared no better. The gods of ancient days were mostly lords, with uncertain divinity and still more uncertain morality. Theology was superstition. Life was an idle dream. But are we sure that our religious geography, even in the present day, is so advanced as to be as broad as God's world? Councils, and synods, and creeds have eagerly striven to keep enterprising voyagers from passing beyond settled limits. Men have ever been frightened of God's open seas. They prefer a tideless Mediterranean to the broad swell and shoreless ranges of an Atlantic. "We hoped"—what? That God was much less than He has turned out to be; that His kingdom would fall peacefully within the limits we had ordained for it! A child, brought up in a deep and narrow glen, never having ventured out of it, has reduced the sum of visible things to a very insignificant item. He has seen the sun rise over the hill, the wheel of its chariot evidently grazing the summit before mounting higher; he hopes to touch the sun some day, and put his hand to hide its face. And the stars that look down upon him at night—such little things, so near and so many—they would be charming to play with. And the blue summer sky—what exquisite joy it would be to place his cheek for a moment close to the cool sweet surface! The day arrives; the child stands on the hill, with all the pretty dreams of childhood vanished for ever in the painful and overwhelming surprise of new thoughts. The sun has climbed very high, and the summer sky is very far off. Creation has widened, but it has spoilt many a pleasant hope. His former world is judged; it is a very little place! This is only a special case that is typical of a great deal in universal human history. In the star-guesses of ancient days the earth was made out to be a planet of the first order—it was the centre of the universe, having sun and moon and stars under its command. It was the earth—and the rest of creation. We have changed all that. The earth has slowly and quietly sunk into its proper position, a little orb of light and shade in the midst of a thousand orbs much larger than it. But, let it be remembered, it is not the earth that has grown smaller, but the conception of the creation that has widened. The same is true with regard to our spiritual attainments. Thoughts of God and of His kingdom that we had cherished long have to be given up—not because they are too great, but because they are too little. He does away with our hopes by outshining them. "We hoped" that we might touch the sun and stars and eternal sky; but God lifts them very high and makes the world very large. It is thus that God, in loving wisdom, disappoints the hopes of men, lest they should satisfy themselves too soon. The hand that breaks our fondest wishes is full of larger mercies than we had expected ever to see. God sends us the pain of a heavy loss in order that we may be led out of our narrowness and self-completeness into broader fields of thought and action. Little hopes make life little; great hopes make a great life. When we limit God we make ourselves poor; when we enlarge our conception of Him we enlarge our whole being. (*H. Elvet Lewis.*) But Him they saw not.—*Him they saw not*:—I. WE HAVE HERE AN UNBELIEVING SEARCH. II. WE HAVE ALSO HERE FINDING WITHOUT A SEARCH. An anxious, honest doubt will not shut out visions of God from the soul. III. WE HAVE HERE THE DISCOVERY OF CHRIST BY WOMAN'S LOVE. IV. APPLICATION. "Him they saw not." To see Him is the characteristic and end of all true life. 1. "Him they saw not"—a sad confession when made in reference to our stated worship hours. To meet Him we ostensibly assemble and join in the outer forms of reverence and worship, and yet of how many may our text apply, "Him they saw not." 2. "Him they saw not," a sad confession when made in relation to the service of work. We see the terrible aspects of human misery, poverty in a thousand forms, and sin in many of its loathsome shapes. Do we see Him in those scenes? In our daily toil how true it is of many—oh, so many—"Him they see not"! 3. "Him they saw not." How sad in relation to earth's sorrows! Sad, yet true. The brotherhood of sorrow and trouble is a worldwide brotherhood. There runs a chain of sorrow through time; this is all dark and mysterious if Him the sufferers see not. (*W. Scott.*) O fools, and slow of heart.—*The folly of unbelief*:—I. UNBELIEF IS FOLLY. 1. It is folly because it arises from want of thought and consideration. Not to think is folly. To give way to

sadness, when a little thought would prevent it, is foolishness. If these two disciples had sat down and said, "Now the prophets have said concerning the Messias that He shall be led as a lamb to the slaughter, and thus was it with our Master," they would have been confirmed in their confidence that Jesus was the Messiah. In the Scriptures they would have found types, and figures, and plain words, in which the death and the rising again, the shame and the glory of Christ are linked together, and His cross is made the road to His throne. Had they compared the testimony of the holy women with the prophecies of the Old Testament, they would have obtained ground of hope. How many a precious text have you and I read again and again without perceiving its joyful meaning, because our minds have been clouded with despondency! We take the telescope, and try to look into heavenly things, and we breathe upon the glass with the hot breath of our anxiety till we cannot see anything; and then we conclude that there is nothing to be seen. 2. Unbelief is folly because it is inconsistent with our own professions. The two disciples professed that they believed in the prophets; and I have no doubt that they did so. They were devout Jews who accepted the Holy Books as Divinely inspired, and therefore infallible; and yet now they were acting as if they did not believe in the prophets at all. 3. Folly, again, is clearly seen in unbelieving sadness, because the evidence which should cheer us is so clear. In the case of the brethren going to Emmaus they had solid ground for hope. They speak, to my mind, a little cavalierly of the holy women as "certain women." I say not they speak disrespectfully; but there is a slurring of their witness by casting a doubt upon it. If those who were at the empty sepulchre were to be believed, why did they doubt? The evidence which they themselves detail, though we have it only in brief in this place, was conclusive evidence that Christ had left the tomb; and yet they doubted it. Now, you and I have had superabundant evidence of the faithfulness of God, and if we are unbelieving, we are unreasonable and foolish. 4. Unbelief is folly, because it very often arises out of our being in such a hurry. They said, "Beside all this, this is the third day." Although the Saviour had said that He would rise on the third day, He had not said that He would appear to them all on the third day. He told them to go into Galilee, and there they should see Him; but that meeting had not yet come. "He that believeth shall not make haste"; but they that do not believe are always restless. Well is it written, "Ye have need of patience." God's promises will be kept to the moment, but they will not all be fulfilled to-day. Divine promises are some of them bills which are payable so many days after sight; and because they are not paid at sight we doubt whether they are good bills. Is this reasonable? Are we not foolish to doubt the sure handwriting of a God that cannot lie? 5. Yet, again, I think we may well be accused of folly whenever we doubt, because we make ourselves suffer needlessly. There are enough bitter wells in this wilderness without our digging more. There are enough real causes of sorrow without our inventing imaginary ones. No asp ever stung Cleopatra so terribly as that which she held to her breast herself. 6. I want you to notice yet further that it was folly, but it was nothing more. I feel so thankful to our Lord for using that word. Though we ought to condemn our own unbelief with all our hearts, yet our Saviour is full of tenderness, and so freely forgives, that He looks upon our fault as folly, and not as wilful wickedness. He knows that it is true of his children, as it is of ours, that folly is bound up in the heart of a child. II. In the second place, our Lord rebuked them for SLOWNESS OF HEART TO BELIEVE. 1. First, we are slow in heart to believe our God, for we are much more ready to believe others than to believe Him. I am often amazed with the credulity of good people whom I had credited with more sense. Credulity towards man and incredulity towards God are singular things to find in the same person. Let us henceforth accept every syllable of God's Word as infallible, while we turn our unbelief towards man and his philosophies and infidelities! 2. Is it not clear that we are slow of heart to believe, since we judge this of others when they are mistrustful? 3. There is another point in which we are very slow of heart to believe, namely, that we do believe, and yet do not believe. We must be very slow of heart when we say "Yes, I believe that promise," and yet we do not expect it to be fulfilled. We are quick of mind to believe mentally, but we are slow of heart to believe practically. The very heart of our believing is slow. They talk about believing in the Lord for eternity, but for this day and next week they are full of fear. True faith is every-day faith. We want a faith which will endure the wear and tear of life—a practical, realizing faith, which trusts in God

from hour to hour. 4. These two disciples must have been slow of heart to believe, again, because they had enjoyed so much excellent teaching, and they ought to have been solid believers. They had been for years with Jesus Christ Himself as a tutor, and yet they had not learned the elements of simple faith. 5. Once more, these two disciples were very slow of heart to believe, because there is so much in the Word which ought to have convinced them. See how the Saviour puts it—"Slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." What a mighty "all" that is! Brethren, are you half aware of the treasure hidden in the field of Scripture? III. Now I want to speak on this matter to THE UNCONVERTED. Some of you are really seeking the Lord, but you say that you cannot believe though you long to believe. 1. This unbelief proves you to be foolish, and slow of heart, for there are other parts of His Word which you easily believe. If there is a text that speaks of judgment to come you believe it. You are ready enough to take in the hard things, but the gracious promises of the loving Christ you will not believe. How can you justify this? How foolish you are! The promises are in the same Book as the threatenings, and if you believe the one, believe the other. 2. Next, you are very foolish, because your objections against believing are altogether poor and puerile. One man cannot believe in Jesus because he does not feel humble enough; as if that affected Christ's power to save. If he felt more humbled, then he could believe in Jesus. Would not that be just believing in himself, and trusting in his own humility instead of trusting in Christ? 3. Though you find it so hard to believe Christ, you have found it very easy to believe in yourself. 4. Moreover, you are very apt now to believe Satan if he comes and says that the Bible is not true, or that Jesus will not accept you, or that you have sinned beyond hope, or that the grace of God cannot save you. 5. Then you know how ready you are, you seekers, to stop short of Christ. 6. And then some of you are foolish and slow of heart because you make such foolish demands upon God. You would believe if you could hear a voice, if you could dream a dream, if some strange thing were to happen in your family. What! Is God to be tied to your fancies. 7. You are foolish and slow of heart because, to a great extent, you ignore the Word of God and its suitability to your case. If a soul in distress will take down the Bible, and turn it over, he need not look long before he will light upon a passage which describes himself as the object of mercy. Those two disciples did not, for a while, see how the prophets met the case of the crucified and risen Christ; but as they did see it, their hearts burned within them. As you also see how God has provided for your condition in His Word, in His covenant, in His Son, your sadness will flee away. (C. H. Spurgeon.) Ought not Christ to have suffered?—*Gain from the sufferings of Christ*:—I. IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, AN INNUMERABLE MULTITUDE OF OUR RACE WILL BE RAISED FROM A STATE OF SINFUL DEGRADATION AND MISERY, AND EXALTED TO THE SOCIETY OF ANGELS AND OF GOD. II. IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, ALL WHO FINALLY BELIEVE AND TRUST IN HIM, AS THE SON OF GOD, WILL BE CONFIRMED IN A STATE OF PERFECT HOLINESS AND HAPPINESS FOR EVER. III. IN THE PROPITIATORY SACRIFICE OF CHRIST, THE DIVINE CHARACTER, IN ITS VARIOUS ATTRIBUTES, IS GLOBIOUSLY DISPLAYED. Reflections: 1. From this subject we are led to admire the character of God's government. 2. We are led to mourn how exceedingly limited are the views of those who think that the only object of Christ's coming into our world was "to publish a good system of morality, and to set us a good example!" 3. We learn how very imperfect are the views of those who suppose that the only object of Christ's coming into our world was to save sinners. But oh! what is the salvation of millions who creep on earth—what is this compared with those glorious displays of God's character, or compared with that eternal confidence in His government which is inspired among the loftier and wider provinces of His empire? 4. We ought not to distrust the wisdom of Providence, even in those events which seem dark and mysterious. 5. Let Christians be provoked to self-denying sacrifices in the cause of humanity, and untiring devotedness to the Saviour. 6. Let the wicked and the worldling, amid the blaze of gospel light, be constrained to repent and believe. 7. The reflection very naturally follows, that incorrigible sinners must be punished with immeasurable severity. 8. We learn from this subject the great propriety of frequently commemorating the dying of the Lord Jesus. (A. Dickinson, M.A.) *The sufferings and the glory of the Christ*:—I. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE SUFFERINGS AND THE GLORY OF CHRIST. II. THE MORAL OBLIGATION. 1. In reference to the fulfilment of inspired prophecy. 2. In reference to the eternal purpose of God. 3. In reference to the conscious needs of our

own nature. (*J. Waite, B.A.*) *Ends proposed in the sufferings of Christ*.—1. It was requisite that Christ should suffer, in order that He might verify His own predictions. 2. A succession of prophets had foretold His sufferings. 3. That the salvation of mankind depended on His death, and could not have been effected without it. 4. The full display of the glorious character of God required that Christ should suffer. 5. A farther end, a subordinate one, I confess, was that Christ, in suffering, might give us an example of holiness and virtue. (*R. Hall, M.A.*) *The sufferings and glory of Christ*.—I. THE PRINCIPAL ELEMENTS OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS FOR SIN. 1. He had a clear view of the unspeakable hideousness and odiousness of sin. 2. He was conscious of the Divine displeasure on account of sin. 3. He was conscious of the absence of the Divine favour, and the presence and power of Satan. II. THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH RENDERED THESE SUFFERINGS NECESSARY. 1. They were necessary for the full manifestation of the Divine character in the work of redemption. 2. They were necessary to prevent the salvation of sinners from infringing on the authority and government of God. III. THE GLORY WHICH IS THE RESULT AND REWARD OF THE SAVIOUR'S SUFFERINGS (see Phil. ii. 9-11). 1. The glory and honour thus bestowed on Christ, are conferred on Him in His character of Mediator. 2. The glory of Christ arises from His superiority over the hosts of heaven. 3. Christ possesses glory as the Governor of the world. 4. Christ is glorious as the Sovereign Head of the Church. (*W. L. Alexander, D.D.*) *He expounded*.—*Christ's first sermon after His resurrection; or, Christ the theme of the prophets*.—I. LET US FIRST CONSIDER OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THIS OCCASION. II. LET US CONSIDER THE BENEFITS WE MAY DERIVE FROM THIS SERMON. 1. It encourages us to search and understand the Scriptures. 2. It encourages us to preach Scripture sermons. 3. It calls the people to listen to Scripture sermons. 4. This sermon should move the preachers of the gospel to imitate their blessed Master in preaching Christ, as suitable opportunities are presented, even to small congregations. 5. This sermon strengthens our faith in the truth of the Scriptures. 6. This sermon tends to increase our abhorrence of sin. 7. This sermon should increase our love to Christ. 8. This sermon should revive our zeal for Christ's cause, and for the salvation of our fellow-creatures. 9. This sermon confirms our hope of heaven. 10. This sermon affords great encouragement to penitent, believing souls. 11. This sermon should be a warning to us that the threatenings of the Bible will be fulfilled. (*E. Hedding, D.D.*) *The Bible a rich storehouse*.—There are promises in God's Word that no man has ever tried to find. There are treasures of gold and silver in it that no man has taken the pains to dig for. There are medicines in it for the want of a knowledge of which hundreds have died. It seems to me like some old baronial estate that has descended to a man who lives in a modern house and thinks it scarcely worth while to go and look into the venerable mansion. Year after year passes away, and he pays no attention to it, since he has no suspicion of the valuable treasures it contains, till at last some man says to him, "Have you been up in the country to look at that estate?" He makes up his mind that he will take a look at it. As he goes through the porch he is surprised to see the skill that has been displayed in its construction; he is more and more impressed as he goes through the halls. He enters a large room, and is astonished as he beholds the wealth of pictures upon the walls, among which are portraits of many of his revered ancestors. He stands in amazement before them. There is a Titian, there is a Raphael, there is a Correggio, and there is a Giorgione. He says, "I never had any idea of these before." "Ah!" says the steward, "there is many another thing that you know nothing about in this castle"; and he takes him from room to room, and shows him carved plate and wonderful statues, and the man exclaims, "Here I have been for a score of years the owner of this estate, and have never before known what things were in it!" But no architect ever conceived of such an estate as God's Word, and no artist, or carver, or sculptor, ever conceived of such pictures, and carved dishes, and statues, as adorn its apartments. Its halls and passages cannot be surpassed for beauty of architecture, and it contains treasures that silver and gold and precious stones are not to be mentioned in connection with. (*H. W. Beecher.*) *Abide with us*.—*Disciples at Emmaus*.—I. THEIR REQUEST. "Abide with us." 1. As a companion. 2. As a teacher. 3. As a comforter. 4. As a guest. II. THEIR PLEA. "Toward evening." Christ makes the night to be light about us. III. THEIR EARNESTNESS. "Constrained." 1. Hearty. 2. Prompt. 3. Persistent. IV. THEIR SUCCESS. "He went in." Wonderful power in prayer. Peasants of earth can prevail with

Prince of heaven. Creatures of a day can detain Creator of universe. (*W. Jackson.*)

*Christ constrained to abide :—*I. CHRIST'S PRESENCE IS EXCEEDINGLY DESIRABLE TO THE SAINTS. This appears from their earnest desires after it, and their sorrows when deprived of it. 1. The presence of Christ is an evidence of His love. Fellowship is the fruit of friendship. 2. Christ's presence is attended with the most desirable effects ; none can enjoy it without deriving the greatest advantages from it. It conveys light into the understanding, as well as warmth into the affections ; so that in proportion to the measure of Christ's revealing Himself to us will be the measure of our profiting in the knowledge of Him. 3. Present communion with Christ is an earnest of everlasting fruition. II. A SEEMINGLY DEPARTING SAVIOUR MAY BE CONSTRAINED, AS IT WERE, TO ABIDE WITH HIS PEOPLE. Speaking after the manner of men, there are three ways of constraining Christ to abide with us. 1. By the exercise of a lively faith. 2. By fervent prayer. 3. By a suitable conduct towards Him. If we would have Christ abide with us, we must do what we can to delight Him and make His stay pleasant. (*B. Beddome, M.A.*)

*The blessed Guest detained :—*I. COMPANIONS LIKELY TO PART. 1. Observe the reason of parting. If Jesus had gone further, it would have been entirely because they forgot to invite Him or failed to urge Him to stay. 2. The point at which they were at all likely to part company with Christ. (1) A point of change. (2) A point where something had been accomplished. (3) They were now about to rest for a time. 3. Had they parted company, the act would have been most blameworthy on their part. II. THE GUEST NEEDING TO BE PRESSED. 1. He could not very well have tarried otherwise. 2. This is a characteristic of the Son of God at all times. (1) He is jealous of our love. (2) Another reason is His anxiety to do us good. He wisely wishes that we should value the mercy which He gives, by being led to consider what a case we should be in if He did not give it. III. A GUEST WORTH PRESSING. IV. AN ARGUMENT WITH WHICH TO HOLD HIM. 1. They would be dreary and lonely without Him. 2. The night was coming on, and they could not think of His being out in it. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

*The evening prayer of Christ's friends :—*I. NOTICE SOME OF THE FEELINGS WHICH MUST HAVE BEEN IN THE HEARTS OF THOSE WHO PRESENTED THIS PRAYER. 1. Grateful interest in a spiritual benefactor. When a soul has become truly alive to God, and to eternal things, there is no tie so pure and deep as that which binds it to the scenes and instruments which opened its view to the higher life. It is when Churches and families and friendships are held together by such ties as these—by helping one another in the way of God and life eternal—that they are united and strong, that they can feel there is no nightfall which has any right or power to part them, and that they must turn in at the journey's close, and dwell together in the same abiding home. One of the enjoyments of that home will be to review and renew the intercourse of the journey, and to discover how the ties were deeper and the benefits higher than our hearts at the time understood, and how these sojourning associations were preparing the way for the unending union of souls. And Christ desires to have a personal share in these ties of grateful affection. He is the Author of spiritual light and life to all who receive it, but here He becomes also the direct instrument—He is the channel as well as the fountain—teaching us that His heart lies hidden behind every other heart that is made a source of blessing to us, and also that He wishes to attach us to Himself as "a man speaketh to his friend." 2. A desire to have such conversation continued. He who has had such fellowship in the thoughts of God on the way will desire to have them also in the house at nightfall. He cannot surrender them at the setting of any earthly sun, but will pray as these disciples did, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening." 3. The last feeling we mention in the hearts of these friends of Christ was the presentiment of something more than they had yet seen or heard. They had gratitude to the speaker, they had love to the theme, but they felt that there was still a mystery behind. They had learned much, but their heart told them they had not learned all. The sense of a great presence hovered near them ; a great truth floated before them ere yet it disclosed itself to their eyes. They fear to ask Him of it ; they shrink from whispering it to themselves ; but there is a beam of light in the stranger's look which promises to lead to fuller revelation, a tone of hopeful confidence in His words that reminds them of a voice which once before spoke from the gloom. What if now, amid a severer storm and out of a denser darkness, that beloved form should step forth again, and the words be heard, "It is I ; be not afraid" ? Such a hope of a risen Saviour, and that this was He, unuttered even to themselves deep down in their soul, and fighting with fears as once their ship

did with waves, was surely present in their hearts when they urged this request: "Abide with us, for it is toward evening." II. SOME OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THIS REQUEST MAY BE OFFERED BY US. It may be said to be suitable to the whole earthly life of every Christian. The Church of Christ, and every member of it in this world, is pursuing this Emmaus journey—travelling from the death of Christ on to the house where He shall give the manifestation of His resurrection. We feel that He who sustains us on the way, and drops into our soul great desires and deep presentiments, will answer them when we reach the heavenly house, and show us there things which eye hath not seen, neither hath it entered into man's heart to conceive. Our life is now hid with Christ in God, but "when He who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory," and therefore we hold Him fast to the close. "Abide with us." Next, it is suitable to those who are suffering under some special despondency of spirit. It is then we need to cling to Him most, and then that He is accustomed to reveal Himself. It is His "to lighten men's darkness, lest they sleep the sleep of death." If He seems to be passing by, constrain Him. "Abide with us, for it is toward evening." "I will not let Thee go until Thou bless me." Oh, faithful heart, thou hast wrestled and overcome. Another time suitable for presenting this request is in approaching the evening of life. Last, we remark that this request is suitable to those who live in an age of the world such as ours. It would be unwarrantable to say that this is the evening of our earth's history, and that we are close upon the second coming of Christ. The world has probably much to look on yet before the final end. But there are various days and nights in God's dispensations, and one of these evenings seems now creeping in upon us. There is a cold vapour of materialism spreading over the minds of many, chilling their conviction of a living God who made and superintends His world. There is only one duty and one source of safety for any man who wishes to have a life that rises above the most barren materialism; it is to seek a close and personal contact with the Saviour as the life of His Spirit, to know Christ as the risen Son of God, who quickens dead souls. These evening shades and doubts and trembling fears, that settle down ever and again on the world's way, are permitted, to compel us to this—to urge us to seek His fellowship with a closer access, and to constrain Him to enter the house with us and reveal Himself in such living power that we, for our parts, can never doubt His truth any more. We need not fear for the gospel of Christ, whatever dangers threaten it. Calvary has still its Olivet; the shades of the Cross, the ascension glory; and every night of trouble in its history, a brighter day-dawn. (*J. Ker, D.D.*) *How to detain Jesus in the soul*:—I. Doubts as to the use of holy things we do, or of God's gifts to us, or even of the faith, and of the reality of every thing unseen, are parts of Satan's assaults against us. Men cannot but see that God *does* promise, in His Word, that He will hear prayer, bless fasting, enrich those who give alms; that by baptism we are clothed with Christ, in the Holy Eucharist are made one with Him; that the Church is the appointed channel of His gifts and of salvation. But men come short of God's gracious will for them; and so they are tempted to doubt of His promises altogether. Just so the disciples of Emmaus. They had believed that Jesus was "He who should redeem Israel." But He redeemed it not in the way they looked for. He had foretold that He should arise from the dead on the third day; "To-day," they say, "is the third day since these things were done," and He had not appeared. Had they, upon this, gone away, He never would have appeared unto them. They were saddened, perplexed, yet still they mused on Jesus and His promises. And so, as and when they looked not, relief came. "Jesus drew near, and went with them," while they knew not, hoped not, that it was He. And so in the like cases now, doubts will have no real hold upon us while we hold fast to Jesus. II. Then, while thus communing with Jesus, take we heed that we act as He teacheth. Our deeds are the fruits of our faith, but they fix it and secure it in our souls. Without deeds love grows chilled, and, with it, faith. Nothing shall hurt thy faith while thy heart is whole with God; nothing shall warp thy heart while, for love of Christ, thou dost deeds of love. III. There is yet another and larger teaching of this history, which extends over the whole of life, relates to every communion, to every fervent prayer which any, by God's grace, prays, to every melting of the hard heart, to every drawing of the soul to serve God better. So is it with the soul. Jesus visits it many ways. Every visitation of God, in awe and mercy, is a visit of Jesus to the soul. It feels His presence. It is troubled, and turns to Him; it is alarmed at itself, or with fears of hell, and flees to Him; or He brings before it its own crooked ways and

the loathsomeness of its sin, and it would fain escape out of itself to Him; or He gives it thoughts of His own everlasting love, and the bliss of ever loving, ever being beloved; and kindles some longing for Him. Everything which deadens the soul to the world, or quickens it to heavenly things, is a visit of Jesus. And now, what should we do, when, in this fleeting world, nothing, not even virtue, abideth at one stay? What should be our hope, when all fleeteth, but in Him who alone abideth, who alone is our stay? "And now, Lord, what is my hope? Truly, my hope is even in Thee." "Abide with us, Lord." He giveth His grace, that we may know His sweetness; He seemeth to withdraw it, that He may draw us up after it to Himself. He sheweth Himself, that we may love Him; He hideth Himself, that we may long for Him, and the more we seek Him the more may find Him. "Abide with us, Lord!" For without Thee this world's light, and all the purest joys of the whole world, were but a false glare, cold and comfortless to the soul. With Thee, who art light and love, all darkness is light and joy." Precious, above the price of the whole world, is every moment in which Christ speaks to the soul. Only, in all we say, think, do, fear, hope, enjoy, let us say, "Abide with us, Lord." We fear our own unsteadfastness; "Lord, abide with us!" The foe is strong, and we, through our sins, weak; "Lord, abide with us," and be our strength. We are ever subject to change, and ebb, and flow; "Abide with us, Lord," with whom "is no change." The pleasures of the world would lead us from Thee; "Abide with us, Lord," and be Thou our joy. The troubles of the world would shake our endurance; "Abide with us, Lord," and bear them in us, as Thou didst bear them for us. Thou art our refreshment in weariness; Thou our comfort in trouble; Thou our refuge in temptation; Thou in death our life; Thou in judgment our Redeemer. If our Lord give thee any fervour in prayer, say to Him, "Abide with me, Lord!" Use the fervour He giveth, to stretch on to some higher fervour, to long for some more burning, deeper love; not as though thou couldest gain it for thyself, but, as emboldened by Him who hath "held out His golden sceptre of His righteousness and mercy unto thee, that thou mayest 'touch it,' and ask what thou wilt. If Satan would withdraw thee from prayer by weariness, hold thou on the firmer. Say, "Abide with me, Lord," and He will be with thee in thy prayer. (E. B. Pusey, D.D.)

As He sat at meat with them, He took bread.—The meal at Emmaus:—I. THE BREAKING AND DISTRIBUTION OF BREAD. 1. The old, familiar, blessed intercourse between Christ and His disciples had not been put an end to, then, by all that had passed during those three mysterious days. Death vanishes as a nothing in their intercourse; they stand where they were; the fellowship is unbroken; the society is the same; all that there used to be of love and friendship, of peaceful concord, of true association—it abides for ever. 2. The true idea of the relation which results from Christ and His presence is that of the Family. He takes His place at the head of the table; He is the Lord of the household, though it be but the household of two men, and they belong to the family and the society which He founds. 3. Where Christ is invited as a Guest, He becomes the Host. Our Master never comes empty-handed. Where He is invited, He comes to bestow; where He is welcomed, He comes with His gifts; when we say, "Do Thou take what I offer," He says, "Do thou take Myself."

II. THE DISCOVERY. The consequence of this assumption of the position of Master, Host, Bestower, is that "their eyes were opened, and they knew Him." Where Christ is loved and desired, the veriest trifles of common life may be the means of His discovery. There is nothing so small but that to it there may be attached some filament which will bring after it the whole majesty and grace of Christ and His love.

III. THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE LORD. 1. When Christ's presence is recognized, the senses may be put aside. We have lost, it is true, the bodily presence of our Master; but it is more than made up to us by the clearer knowledge of His spiritual verity and stature, the deeper experience of the profounder aspects of His mission and message, the indwelling Spirit, and the knowledge of Him working evermore for us all. 2. When Christ is discerned, there is work to be done. (A. Maclaren, D.D.) Their eyes were opened.—*The spiritual eye:—*It is quite certain that there is an inward faculty in the mind which accurately corresponds to the natural eye. It is the power by which we morally see and morally apprehend truth. And that eye, just like the bodily eye, admits of being either closed or opened. This eye of the soul is a part of man's original constitution. Familiarly we have known it under the name of faith. Faith is that eye of the soul. This eye is born blind. But while nature, in this matter of our blindness, has done much, we ourselves have done much more.

The closed eye is being continually closed more and more, and sealed in its closeness. The mistakes of education—the bad early training—youthful prejudice—every neglect of a duty, and every violence done to conscience—the grievings of the spirit, each secret sin and wilful act of disobedience—all our proud tempers, and impure desires, and self-willed thoughts—all that has not God in it—the whole contact with this wicked world—almost every act, and word, and imagination of our lives—all has, every day, been fastening up the fast eye faster and faster. And so at last it comes, that a man can really see nothing but what is material. He has no perception of Divine things. Jesus is practically hidden. Neither his sin, nor its pardon, nor its punishment, nor peace of mind, nor the higher love, nor the heavenly life, nor another world, nor God, does he descry. And yet, all the while, all these things are near him and about him every moment—he moves in that beautiful circle, heaven is round him, but there is a thick curtain before him, it is an unknown thing, it is all to him as if it were not. How is the shut eye opened? Now, it might be enough to say that it is done by an act of sovereign grace and power. That is true; but that would not practically help you. You would then say, “I must wait till that act of sovereign power passes upon me.” Therefore, let me look at it rather differently. There is the eye of the body, which you shut and which you open. How does the physical eye open? There is an act of will in the brain, and that act of will in the brain moves the organ. It is a perfect mystery how the will can take effect upon the nerves, and so upon the muscles, of any part of our body; but it is done. The will acts naturally; but there is another power, an appointment, and a secret omnipotence, which is wanted. So it is with the opening of the spiritual eye. There must be will. True, God gives the will; but He is always giving it, and you are always resisting it. The will begins—the will produces an effort—the effort puts certain things in motion—and God being in it all—in the will which He has created, and in the effort, and in the process—the thing is done—the eye opens, vision is restored. It may be gradually, it may be with more or less of clearness and growth, but it is vision—the eye is opened—and things which were invisible come in through the new avenue, and make their mark, and stamp their impression on the inner man. And the man, the highest part of the man, sees; he finds he is in a new world, and because he is in a new world, he is a new creature. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) **Did not our heart burn within us.—Christ talking—hearts burning:—**I. CHRIST'S METHOD OF REVEALING HIMSELF. 1. Scripture exposition. 2. Talking. The grandest things demand the simplest presentation. II. LOOK NOW AT SOME OF THE EFFECTS OF THIS REVELATION ON HIS DISCIPLES. 1. The first effect was deeply interior and experimental. “Their hearts began to burn within them.” There was an unusual interest—a feeling they had never had till now—a longing and a love, and a begun enthusiasm which all their after-life was to express. What effect can be finer than this? or more desirable?—the effect of the burning heart. It is well enough to have an idea, and a sight of things; to see the things that can be seen, and know the truth that can be known. But it is yet better to have a deep, warm, inward sense of them; to have them burning in the breast, and all the breast aflame with the holy fire. No better effect could come to us of our “talkings” together by the way; and of our endeavours to open to each other the Scriptures. 2. The next effect is what we may express in the phrase: “the willing feet.” “They rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem.” The feeling was instinctive that something must be done, and done immediately. All this good news which has turned their hearts into fountains of joy, must, in some way, be told, and told without delay; in what way may best remain to be seen; but the first thing to be done is to return to Jerusalem. There their hopes were buried three days ago, and they go now to tell of their resurrection. There, their friends are; and probably their work, and possibly their sufferings. No matter. They must go. Is it not always thus with those to whom Christ makes Himself known? Arising out of the feeling of His presence, along with the burning of heart that makes that presence known, is the immediate and ineffaceable conviction that something must be done for Him. “Here am I, send me.” “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” At least, I feel that whatever my hand findeth to do, I must do it with all my might, and without delay. I must go; and when I reach the end of the little journey, I must speak. 3. Thus we come to another effect of the relation of Christ, which we may call the effect of the ready-tongue. When they came to Jerusalem, they told “what things were done in the way,” and how “He was known of them in the breaking of bread.” (*A. Raleigh, D.D.*) **Hallowed feelings:—**Our emotions are connected with our intellectual

states, yet distinct from them and beyond them, because the result of them. The text records the way in which the feelings of the two disciples were excited by the conversation of the unknown stranger who joined them on the way to Emmaus. It suggests a twofold observation. I. THE GOSPEL APPEALS TO THE FEELINGS OF MEN. It is a religion intended for man in the sense that it meets the wants of his entire nature. And the emotional is as really a part of man's nature as any other. It would not be a sufficient religion for man if it merely issued its commands as to what should be done in the shape of bodily service, or even in the exercise of a discipline intended for the subjugation of the body; nor if it only furnished the intellect with instruction and elevating material. It must address itself also to the moral and emotional nature. Accordingly, Christianity seizes on the passions, sympathies, and susceptibilities of our nature. The Old and New Testaments are alike full of them, as the experience of the godly. It follows that those whose feelings are not touched by it are unacquainted with its saving power. II. THE GOSPEL IS ADAPTED TO EXCITE THE FEELINGS OF MEN. 1. The truths of the gospel are in themselves adapted to excite feeling. You attempt to produce emotion by the exhibition of objects that are suitable to that end. Take, as illustrations, the feelings of joy and of love. Could anything be more adapted to their production than the truth that God loves the world of sinners; that He gave His Son to death for them; and that whosoever believes in Him receives pardon and eternal life? 2. This is especially the case when they are addressed to men in certain states of mind. You would never expect to interest a dying man by placing on his pillow the crown of an earthly kingdom. A word of comfort respecting the future is incomparably more to him than all the splendours of this world. Thus, when you laboured under deep conviction of sin and consequent distress, perhaps amounting to hopelessness, the nature, sufficiency, and freeness of salvation in Christ was expounded, and you found it exactly what you wanted. Thus, when you have come to the sanctuary with some trouble on your heart that has almost shaken your faith to its centre, the theme of the ministry has been God's faithfulness and love, or the mystery along with the benevolence of His providence; and your fainting soul has felt like a falling child whose mother has tenderly taken it up and saved it from hurt. 3. Some circumstances are specially favourable to the excitement of the feelings by the gospel. The public worship of the sanctuary. The communion of Christian friends. The retirement of the closet. 4. Spiritual feelings must be sustained by the means which first produces them. Do you wish to keep your heart warm in this sense? Often walk and talk with Jesus. Let Him be much in your thoughts. (*John Rawlinson.*) *A suggestive question:—*I. This question which these disciples asked themselves, illustrates THE DIFFICULTY WE HAVE IN UNDERSTANDING AT THE TIME THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF EVENTS IN OUR LIVES, AND ESPECIALLY OF THE RELIGIOUS EVENTS IN THEM. We are naturally disposed to think that the important events must be striking; that they must address themselves powerfully to the imagination; that they must stand out, in obvious prominence, from among surrounding occurrences. Whereas it may very well happen that what is most important in reality, that is to say, in its bearing on our prospects in the future life, is in appearance commonplace and trivial. Of course in this world we look at the plan of our lives from below, not from above. We deal with the task of each day, of each hour, as it comes; we have no time or capacity to make a map or theory of the whole and to arrange the several parts in their true proportion and perspective. It is with our conceptions of life as with a landscape painting; some tree in the immediate foreground fills up a third of the canvas, while the towers of a great city, or the outlines of a mountain range, lie far away in the distance. In another state of existence the relative worth of everything will be clear to us: here we constantly make the wildest mistakes, partly from the narrowness of our outlook, and partly from the false ideals which too often control our judgment. We look out for the sensational, which never comes to us quite as we anticipate it; we walk near Jesus Christ, who veils His presence, in the ordinary paths of life; perhaps we never get beyond a certain passing glow of emotion, which dies away and leaves us where we were. Our hearts burn within us. But what this has meant we only find out when it is too late. II. Another point suggested by the words is THE USE OF RELIGIOUS FEELING. "Did not our heart burn within us?" The disciples ask each other the question in a tone of self-reproach. While our Lord explained to them the true sense of the Hebrew Scriptures with reference to His person and His work, His sufferings and His triumph, their whole inward being, thought, affection, fancy, had kindled into flame. They were on

fire, and yet it all had led to nothing. Ought it not to have led to something? Ought it not, at the least, to have convinced them that, within the range of their experience, One only could have spoken as He did? Certainly, my brethren, true religion cannot afford to neglect any elements of man's complex nature; and so it finds room for emotion. That glow of the soul with which it should hail the presence of its Maker and Redeemer is as much His handiwork as the thinking power which apprehends His message or the resolve which enterprises to do His will. Yet religious emotion, like natural fire, is a good servant but a bad master. It is the ruin of real religion when it blazes up into a fanaticism that, in its exaltation of certain states of feeling, proscribes thought, and makes light of duty, and dispenses with means of grace, and passes through some phase of frantic, although disguised, self-assertion, into some further phase of indifference or despair. But, when kept well in hand, emotion is the warmth and lustre of the soul's life. III. A third consideration which the words suggest, is **THE DUTY OF MAKING AN ACTIVE EFFORT TO UNDERSTAND TRUTH AS IT IS PRESENTED TO US.** I say, an active effort; because, as a rule, our minds are apt to be passive. We let truth come to say what it can; we do not go out to meet it, to welcome it, to offer it a lodging in the soul, and, if it may be, to take its measure and understand it. If we have serious thoughts now and then, and look into our Bibles in a casual way, and attend some of the Church services, we think we have good reason to be satisfied that we know all that it concerns our soul's health to know; perhaps even that we know enough to discuss religious questions of the day with confidence. We drift through life in this way, some of us; making our feelings and preferences the rule of truth; assuming that what is popular for the passing hour, or what comes readily to us, must be the will of God. He indeed is near from whom we might learn the truth; walking by our side, ready and longing to be inquired of if we only will; but we dispense ourselves from the necessity. Religious truth, we say to ourselves, is very simple and easy of acquirement; that which is intended for all must be open to all, and cannot be the monopoly of those who make efforts to know it. And yet nothing in the Bible is clearer than that it makes the attainment of truth depend upon an earnest search for truth (Matt. vii. 7; Prov. viii. 17; Jer. xxxiii. 3; Prov. ii. 3-5). In conclusion, let us reflect that our Lord's presence with His disciples during the forty days after His resurrection was in many ways an anticipation of His presence in His Church to the end of time. His religion wears a commonplace appearance; its sacred books seem to belong to the same category as the works of human genius; its Sacraments are, St. Augustine said, rites chiefly remarkable for their simplicity; its ministers are ordinary, and often erring and sinful, men. But for all that, the Incarnate Son is here, who was crucified and rose from death, and ascended and reigns in heaven, He is here; and the trial and duty of faith is what it was eighteen centuries ago, namely, to detect, under the veil of the familiar and the commonplace, the presence of the Eternal and the Divine. We, too, walk along the road to Emmaus; and the Divine Teacher appears to us, as St. Mark puts it, "in another form"; and our hearts, perhaps, glow within us, yet without doing anything for our understandings or our wills. (*Canon Liddon.*) *Christ warms the heart:*—I. **CONSIDER THE OCCASION, OR THE MEANS EMPLOYED.** "He talked with us by the way." "He opened to us the Scriptures." II. **CONSIDER THE EFFECT PRODUCED BY THAT OCCASION AND THOSE MEANS.** "Did not our heart burn," &c. There is in real communion that which warms the heart. Away from Christ, all is coldness in regard to God and spiritual things; away from Christ, men even pride themselves in a sort of stoical apathy in regard to the claims of God; away from Christ, the most constraining motives of the gospel are heard with unconcern. There is communion to be had with Christ in prayer. Many pray in a formal way, but have never yet known "the heart to burn within them" in prayer. So with meditation: "My meditation of Him shall be sweet," said the psalmist. "Did not our heart burn within us?" And whence this effect? They were, you remember, anxious disciples, perplexed with doubts and seeking the truth. Hence, as they heard Him expound the Scriptures, they found their doubts gradually cleared away. It is when you discover your personal interest in the things spoken of—"That promise speaks to me," "That Saviour is my Saviour," "This God is our God even unto death," "He is mine, and I am His"—that you will again feel "the heart to burn within you." (*J. H. Hambleton, M.A.*) *The means, author, and effects of Christian instruction:*—I. **WE HAVE THE INSTRUMENTALITY USED BY OUR LORD IN THE INSTRUCTION OF HIS DISCIPLES.** We are told it was "the Scriptures." God honours His word above all His attri-

butes—"Thou hast magnified Thy word," says David, "above all Thy name;" *i.e.*, "all Thy perfections." Why does He do so? Because it is by His Word He reveals the mystery of His essence, and His moral perfections. Because without His Word there would be no God to be recognized and worshipped. II. We have to consider, THE AGENCY BY WHICH THIS INSTRUMENTALITY WAS MADE EFFECTIVE. We read that Christ "opened" the Scriptures. But where was the necessity for "opening" the Scriptures? What is there so mystical in the nature of this book, that it should have been as written in unintelligible characters which they did not understand? Remember that the Bible is a sealed book to any who are unenlightened by the Spirit of God! It is true of the Bible as of every department of Divine knowledge, that the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God—they are foolishness to him; he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned. III. But, again, What was THE SENSIBLE EFFECT PRODUCED IN THE MINDS OF THOSE WHO WERE THUS INSTRUCTED BY OUR LORD? Their hearts burned within them. Observe, they got light and heat at the same time, "Did not our heart burn within us?" With what did they burn?—with shame for their sins; their hearts were melted into penitence, inflamed with zeal, and filled with the fire of Divine love; the Spirit of God kindled within them what the breath of God breathed in them!—the bright light of hope shone within their minds, and they were enabled to take a clear view of Christ—Christ was manifested to them—"their heart burned within them." Here, then, we see the sensible effect produced by the instruction of our Lord in the Scriptures. Here we have presented to us the instrumentality employed in the work of conversion; the agent in the work of conversion; and the effect of the work of conversion—we have the Bible as the instrumentality; we have Christ as the teacher; and we have burning hearts as the effect produced by the Spirit of God. (*H. H. Beamish, M.A.*) *The Bible gives light and warmth.*—A gentleman approached the fruit stand of an Italian woman, whom he found very intently engaged reading a book. "What are you reading there, my good woman, that seems to interest you so much?" he inquired. "The Word of God," said the woman. "The Word of God! Who told you that?" "God told me Himself," answered the woman. "God told you? How did He do that? Have you ever talked with God? How did He tell you that was His Word?" Not accustomed to discuss questions of theology, the woman was a little confused. Recovering herself, she said: "Sir, can you prove to me that there is a sun up there in heaven?" "Prove it," said the man, "Why do you ask me to prove it? It proves itself. It warms me and I see its light; what better proof can any one want?" The woman smiled and said: "Just so; you are right. And that is just the way God tells this Book is His Word. I read it, and it warms me and gives me light. I see Him in it, and what it says is light and warmth which none but God can give; and so He tells me it is His Word. What more proof do I need?" *Divine influence needed to understand the Scriptures.*—Unsanctified men cannot read the Bible to profit. If you bring me a basket full of minerals from California, and I take them and look at them, I shall know that this specimen has gold in it, because I see there little points of yellow gold, but I shall not know what the white and the dark points are that I see. But let a metallurgist look at it, and he will see that it contains not only gold, but silver, and lead, and iron, and he will single them out. To me it is a mere stone, with only here and there a hint of gold, but to him it is a combination of various metals. Now take the Word of God, that is filled with precious stones and metals, and let one instructed in spiritual insight go through it, and he will discover all these treasures; while, if you let a man uninstructed in spiritual insight go through it, he will discover those things that are outside and apparent, but those things that make God and man friends, and that have to do with the immortality of the soul in heaven, escape his notice. No man can know these things unless the Spirit of God has taught him to discern them. (*H. W. Beecher.*) While He opened to us the Scriptures.—*The opening of the Scriptures.*—I. THE SCRIPTURES CLOSED. 1. The mysterious nature of the Bible itself. 2. The degenerate faith of the disciples. II. THE SCRIPTURES OPENED. 1. It is necessary to have Christ as the interpreter. 2. The disciples must possess a sympathetic heart. 3. Given these conditions, the Scriptures are opened with the utmost ease. III. THE RESULT OF THE OPENING OF THE SCRIPTURES. 1. The two disciples understood that a thorough unity of design pervaded the whole Bible. 2. They perceived that Christ was the great theme of the Scriptures. 3. They were filled with wonder at the aspect in which Christ was revealed. 4. They experienced true happiness. (*H. O.*

Williams.) *Christ opening the Scriptures:—*I. OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THIS OCCASION. II. THE BENEFITS WE MAY DERIVE THEREFROM. 1. It encourages us to search the Scriptures. 2. It encourages us to preach Scripture sermons. 3. It calls on the people to listen to Scripture sermons. 4. It strengthens our faith in the truth of the Scriptures. 5. It strengthens our faith in the predictions concerning the increase of Christ's kingdom. (*Canon Fleming.*) *Scripture opened:—*

I. THE HOLY SCRIPTURES ARE THE ONLY SOURCE OF DIVINE WISDOM AND CONSOLATION. II. FOR THE FULL UNDERSTANDING OF THE SCRIPTURES, WE NEED THE SPIRITUAL TEACHING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. III. THIS SPIRITUAL TEACHING IS OFTEN SPECIALLY GRANTED TO TRUE DISCIPLES, WHEN ENGAGED IN HOLY CHRISTIAN COMMUNION. IV. WHEN YOUR AFFECTIONS ARE WARMED BY DISCOVERIES MADE TO YOU IN THE WORD OF GOD, THEN YOU SHOULD AT ONCE RECOGNIZE THE PRESENCE OF JESUS, AND EARNESTLY ENTREAT HIS CONTINUANCE WITH YOU. (*J. Jowett, M.A.*)

*Christ opening Scripture:—*I. IT IS CHRIST'S WORK TO OPEN AND APPLY THE SCRIPTURES WHERE THEY REACH THE HEART. He is the great Prophet of His Church, who hath already revealed the will of God for our salvation. He opens the Scripture that it may not remain a sealed Book, and opens the understanding, and unbars the heart, that the light may enter to make the first saving change, and to be our strength and comfort afterward. II. THE OPENING AND APPLYING OF THE SCRIPTURES ARE THE MEANS CHRIST WILL ORDINARILY USE, TO REACH AND CARRY ON HIS DESIGN UPON THE HEART. III. 'TIS IN THIS WAY OF OPENING AND APPLYING THE SCRIPTURES, THAT CHRIST IS TO BE CONCEIVED OF, AND REGARDED AS TALKING WITH HIS PEOPLE. He did so personally while He was upon earth, and continues to do so by His ministers and Spirit now when He is gone to heaven. IV. IN WHAT RESPECTS THEIR HEARTS MAY BE SAID TO BURN, TO WHOM CHRIST EFFECTUALLY SPEAKS. To keep your thoughts distinct, I shall consider this, either with respect to sinners, whom He is drawing to him: or to believers, whom He is acquainting with their interest in Him. 1. As to sinners whom He is drawing to Him. When Christ opens the Scriptures, and talks with such, their hearts may be said to burn—(1) With a sense of sin, and a fearful apprehension of deserved wrath. (2) Their hearts are made to burn with ardent desire for deliverance from their sinful wretched state, and for an interest in Christ the only, all-sufficient Saviour. 2. As to believers, whom Christ is acquainting with their interest in Him, and thereby talking with them to their comfort; whilst He does so, their hearts may be made to burn. (1) With love to Him; and (2) With longing desires to be with Him. And both these are excited by what He makes the subject of His discourses with them, namely, His sufferings, and His glory. The followers of Christ may have their hearts made to burn, with desire to see, and be for ever with Him. V. WITH WHAT TEMPER THEY, WHO UNDER CHRIST'S SPEAKING TO THEM HAVE FELT THEIR HEARTS TO BURN WITHIN THEMSELVES, SHOULD BE LED TO OPEN IT TO OTHERS. The answer to this is obvious. 1. With deep humility; as having their eye upon their unworthiness, that the Lord of glory should talk with such as them, and in so plain and powerful a manner lead them into an acquaintance with the Word of truth; and thereby with the things concerning Himself, which are so necessary to their safety and peace. 2. With raised wonder; they being ready to say, How strange an ardour did we feel within us kindling into an heavenly flame, while He talked with us, and opened to us the Scriptures? 3. With thankfulness and joy; from a just sense of the value of that distinguishing grace of Christ, which made the remembrance of the time and place where it was vouchsafed so pleasant to them afterwards. 4. With desire and endeavour to bring others acquainted with Christ, by whom their hearts were made to burn within them. (*D. Wilcox.*)

*The right point of view:—*I go into a gallery where there are illustrious persons hung in portraiture. I see one that I am attracted to, and I look upon it, and I know this much—that it is a man. I know that it is a man of beauty, or, lacking beauty, indicating great intellectual development and power of brain. A number of such external things I know of him, but nothing more. By and by, some one says to me, "His name is Goethe." Ah! instantly a vision springs up in my mind. I have read of Goethe. I know his poems. I know his dramas. I know much of the whole German literature which he has created. And the moment I hear his name, and associate it with that portrait, it assumes new life. It is a hundred times more to me than it was before. I say to myself, "Then that is Goethe, is it? Well—well—well"; and all these *wells* merely mean that I am thinking, and gathering together all my scattered knowledge, and concentrating it on that effigy. I do not know him personally, though I know him

as well as a book could interpret him to me. But suppose I had been in Germany; suppose I had been invited to his house; had seen him in the morning, at noon, and at night; at the table, familiarly; with his manuscripts, in his study; suppose I had seen him when topics came before him for discussion, or in his intercourse with men; suppose I had seen him surrounded by little children, and seen how they affected him; suppose I had seen how noble personages affected him; suppose I had seen him in moments of calmness and silence and reverie; or at funerals; or at great public rejoicings; in all those moods and circumstances which go to show exactly what a man is; suppose I had *lived* with him, and seen the coruscation, the whole play of his soul, would I not then have a knowledge of him which no portrait could give me? Having gained this larger knowledge of him, I say, "I never knew Goethe before"; but one exclaims, "You never knew Goethe before? Yes you did. I pointed him out in such a gallery at such a time; and now you say you never knew him before!" But would it not be true? (*H. W. Beecher.*)

Understanding the Scriptures:—The biographer of Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, when describing his plan of studying the Bible, makes this important observation: "There are two methods of reading Scripture, perfectly distinct in their object and nature: the one is practical, the other scientific; the one seeks the religious truth of Scripture as bearing on the inquirer's heart and personal feelings; the other, the right comprehension of the literary and intellectual portions of the Bible. . . . Only those who feel the Bible can understand it." *Christ's method of imparting instruction*:—There are here several points of very great interest. We have a striking illustration of our Lord's method of teaching, which was to give more when that already given had been duly received. We have also a most emphatic warning as to the danger of losing golden opportunities, or of letting slip through ignorance or procrastination the means of acquiring great accessions of knowledge and grace. These truths will open before you as we proceed: at present we need only announce, as the general object of our discourse, the showing you how near the disciples were to the losing the manifestation of their Master, forasmuch as though "He made as though He would have gone further," and how certainly they would have lost that manifestation, had they not been enabled to say with perfect truth, in the words of our text—"Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" Now, you may all see, if you study with any attention the record of our blessed Saviour's ministrations, that He required a peculiar state of mind in those to whom He taught truth, withholding it where likely to be despised or made an instrument of injury, but imparting it where He saw that it would be reverently and profitably received. It was evidently a principle with Christ, as indeed He expressly announced, to give more where what had been given had been duly improved, so that fresh communications were made to depend upon men's use of past. He did not pretend to open truth after truth, just as though His whole business had been to furnish to the world a certain amount of revelation, whether they would hear or whether they would forbear; but He watched with great attentiveness the reception of truth, and He added or withheld according as that reception did or did not indicate love for truth and a readiness to obey its demands. And the importance to ourselves of observing the course which Christ pursued upon earth lies mainly in this. We have no reason to suppose that such course was followed only in the days of His public ministrations, but rather, that it was universally characteristic of God's spiritual dealings. You will never make way with the Bible by going to it in a spirit of speculation, carrying to it the same feelings as to a treatise on some branch of human science. It is not indeed now, as it was when our Lord personally taught; when the letter, so to speak, of Scripture might be variously distributed, according to men's various dispositions and capacities, but it still is, that the letter, though equally accessible to all, is not equally illuminated to all; and by keeping altogether to Himself the power of illuminating the page, so that He can leave that a parable to one which He clears from all mystery to another, God can cause that now, as much as in the days of the Redeemer, the amount of knowledge shall be proportioned to certain moral qualities and acts. You may be sure that it is as true now as ever it was, and in as large a sense, that "whosoever doeth the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine"; for there are innermost meanings in Scripture which will never be reached through learning and ingenuity, but which open before the humble and prayerful inquiry; so that passages on which criticism is vainly turning all its strength, and to which it can attach none but an obscure and unimportant sense, reveal to many an uneducated and simple-minded Christian the counsels of God and the

glories of eternity; so that it still depends on your love for truth, and on your willingness to act on it so fast as discovered, whether you shall grow in the knowledge of heavenly things; just as it was in the days of the Redeemer, when a parable was employed to veil truth from the careless, or a miracle concealed, to withhold evidence from the obstinate. But never think that an unaided intellect can master scriptural difficulties, or that unimproved knowledge can be a good thing. There is a certain point up to which Divine teaching will advance, but there will pause, in order that it may be ascertained whether you prize what you have learned, and are sincere in the desire to learn more. And all this was imaged by the conduct of Christ with reference to His disciples. This "making as though he would have gone further," was but an instance of that cautiousness of which we have spoken as characteristic of His ministry. He just wanted to have evidence whether truth were duly loved; for on His finding that evidence depended, according to His universal rule, His continuing His instruction. There are many, we are thoroughly persuaded, who often miss the manifestation of Christ through the indolently letting slip some presented opportunity; nay, we doubt whether there be any man who is brought within hearing of the gospel unto whom there have not been moments in which he has stood upon the very threshold of the kingdom of heaven, in which it has depended upon his immediately obeying some impulse or hearkening to some suggestion whether the door should fly open or remain closed against him. The mind of the unconverted man, stirred through some secret instrumentality, has felt it proposed to it that it should take into its chambers a Guest who might discipline the passions and remodel the character; but then it has been questioned whether the proposal should be instantly closed with, or longer time given for deliberation, and because the latter course has been adopted—because, that is, the disciples when at Emmaus have parted from their Teacher in the street, and gone alone into the house, the golden opportunity has been lost, and there has been no manifestation of Christ to the soul. You may not be thoroughly aware of it, but we should wish you to be assured, that religion is of such a nature that eternity is very frequently dependent on a moment. You can never be certain that an impulse will be repeated or a suggestion renewed; so that in parting from the Teacher who has awakened some serious emotion, in place of taking Him with you into your dwelling, that the emotion may be deepened, you are perhaps letting go your last likelihood of salvation, and shutting yourselves up to indifference and impenitence. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *While He talked with us*:—"I have lately seen," wrote Mr. Hervey, "that most excellent minister of the ever blessed Jesus, Mr. —. I dined, supped, and spent the evening with him at Northampton, in company with Dr. Doddridge, and two pious clergymen of the Church of England, both of them known to the learned world by their valuable writings; and surely I never spent a more delightful evening, or saw one that seemed to make nearer approaches to the felicity of heaven. A gentleman, of great worth and rank in the town, invited us to his house, and gave us an elegant treat; but how mean was his provision, how coarse his delicacies, compared with the fruit of my friend's lips! They dropped as the honeycomb, and were a well of life." *The Lord is risen indeed.—Jesus risen*:—The evidence for the resurrection of Christ is of two kinds, predictive and historical. From the Old Testament it appears that Messiah was to rise; from the New, that Jesus of Nazareth did rise, and therefore is the Messiah. Among the predictive witnesses, the first place is due to that ancient and venerable order of men, styled patriarchs, or heads of families, whose lives and actions, as well as their words, were descriptive of the person, in faith of whom they lived and acted, instructing, interceding for, and conducting their dependents, as representative prophets, priests, and kings; looking forward unto the Author and Finisher of their faith and ours, who, by dying and rising again, was to exhibit to the world the Divine fulness of all these characters. In the class of the predictive witnesses of our Lord's resurrection, the second place is claimed by the law. When we see the Levitical high priest arrayed in the garments of glory and beauty; when we behold him purifying all the parts of the figurative tabernacle with blood, and then entering within the veil, into the holiest of all, to present that propitiating blood before the offended Majesty of heaven; is it possible, even though an apostle had not applied all these circumstances for us, to detain the imagination a moment from fixing itself on the great High Priest of our profession; the plenary satisfaction made on the cross; His resurrection in an immortal body, no more to stand charged with sin, no more to see corruption; the purification of the Church by His precious blood; His ascension into heaven, and intercession for us, in the presence of God?

Next to the patriarchs and the law, the prophets press for admittance, to deliver their testimony; for "the testimony of Jesus," as saith the angel in the Revelation, "is the spirit of prophecy." Some of these give their evidence in the ancient way of figure and emblem; others, with less reserve, in express literal declarations. A fact of so extraordinary a nature as the resurrection of a body from the dead, predicted, as we have seen, at sundry times and in divers manners, by the patriarchs, the law, and the prophets, cannot be supposed to have happened without sufficient witnesses of its accomplishment. (*Bishop Horne.*) *The Lord is risen indeed:—*

I. LET US VERIFY THE STATEMENT OF THE TEXT. In attempting this, let me first of all call your attention to Christianity as an existing fact. And the centre of that belief is the doctrine of the resurrection. We can thus trace the doctrine of the resurrection to its source, and see that it was no gradual innovation into the Church's belief; no doctrine gradually taking shape, as myths do, from ideas which have been floating about in the minds of men; but an alleged fact, attested by those who professed to be eye-witnesses of the event; and believed in by the Church at a time when these witnesses were still alive. Now, in testing the value of their testimony, two questions present themselves, and give rise to two concurrent traces of thought, both of which, as we think, lead to the conclusion, that no testimony could be more trustworthy than that borne by the evangelists and others to the resurrection of our Lord. This first question, Were they competent witnesses, divides itself into two. Were they deceived themselves? Did they attempt to deceive others? If either of these questions can be answered in the affirmative, their testimony is invalid; if answered negatively, their testimony deserves to be received. That they could not be deceived themselves, is evident from the following considerations—1. The question to which they bear testimony is not one of doctrine on which their judgment might have misled them; but one of fact, on which they were guided by the evidence of their senses. 2. The witnesses were not one or two, but a large number—upwards of five hundred having seen the risen Redeemer at the same time. 3. The men were not fanatics, whose excited imagination might cause them to mistake some uncommon appearance for, or to invest it with, the form of their Lord. Their whole demeanour is the very antipodes to anything like fanaticism. No finer specimen of sobriety than their narrative presents can be found in any language. 4. The times and the manner of the Saviour's appearing were such as to render deception impossible. He appeared repeatedly—at different times and in various circumstances, and was not only visible to the eye, but palpable to the touch. Lastly, their familiarity with the Saviour previous to His death qualified them for recognizing Him after His resurrection. They had been with Him in all circumstances. These considerations amply suffice to show that they could not be deceived. But did they attempt to deceive others? One would think the principles they propagated should be sufficient to acquit them of such a charge. Could impostors devise and propagate principles which surpass the practice of the nations almost as much as heaven contrasts with hell—principles which, wherever they obtain, promote the highest morality, making men truthful, honest, upright, generous, and devout—could impostors devise and propagate such principles as these? We think not. Besides, men do not practise imposition without an object. If they attempt to deceive, it is with a view to some selfish end—could there be any such end contemplated by the disciples of Christ? They could not hope to improve their temporal circumstances. Then, did they hope to gain for themselves a reward in heaven? A reward in heaven, for publishing a falsehood, and imposing on their fellows! We pass on now to consider the second question, Would their testimony if false have been believed in Jerusalem and elsewhere? and the concurrent though different train of thought to which it gives rise. All these statements of the history must have been known to be false by those among whom they were circulated; or at least their falsehood might easily have been made so manifest as to render their reception impossible, and to confine them to the parties with whom they originated. And not only were they capable of effectual contradiction; but those who had the power, had also the strongest inducement to make known their falsehood. **II. LET US ACCOUNT FOR THE EXULTANT FEELINGS WITH WHICH THE DISCIPLES PUBLISHED THIS STATEMENT.** In attempting this it is necessary to place ourselves to some extent in the position of the disciples, in order that we may judge of the manner in which they were personally affected by the event. It is evident from the Gospels that they were greatly overwhelmed by His death. They had sacrificed all they possessed, and were, as it now appeared to them, to gain nothing. Their temporal prospects were blasted. Their friends were alienated from them;

and all they could look for in return was the derision of their neighbours for having indulged baseless expectations. In this state of mind, when it became evident to them that the Lord was risen, when they saw and heard Him, and knew from the old manner and spirit that it was He himself, what a strange revulsion of feeling they must have experienced! What new light must suddenly have flashed upon them! Then He is a king after all, though in another sense than we imagined. Then our expectations are not disappointed; there is a reward for us still, higher than we had dreamed of. Then we have still our friend to lean upon, to care for us, and comfort us, and guide, and help us. Now we have a new conception of our calling and of our Master's reign. Now we can see how our carnal-mindedness kept us from perceiving the full meaning of His gracious words; and that when we attributed to Him hard sayings, He was but holding out to us greater blessings than our hearts were prepared to receive. No wonder that when such thoughts dawned upon them, their hearts were filled with joy! There were reasons, perhaps, for their joy, which even they did not yet fully apprehend—reasons relating to us as well as to them. They did not yet perceive all the results to humanity which were to flow from His death, though ultimately they showed that they knew what importance was attached to it—Peter, *e.g.*, making it the principal subject of his sermons, connecting it with the miracles which he wrought, and in his Epistle attributing to it the new birth of believers; while Paul, in 1 Cor. xv., to which we have already referred, makes it lie at the basis of the entire Christian faith—"If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." The meaning of these words, and the supreme importance of the event to which they refer, may be illustrated by the following considerations: The resurrection was the Divine seal to the Saviour's mission. During His life He claimed to be the Son of God in a sense which made Him equal with the Father—to have come from the bosom of the Father that He might reveal His character to mankind, and open a way by which sinners might approach and find acceptance with Him—to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and, ere His death, exclaimed in reference to this work, "It is finished!" Now, suppose that after all this, He had not risen. In that case His claims would have been falsified. It would have been evident that He was a mere impostor. God does not own this pretended Son of His, who claimed to be one in nature with Himself. His revelation of the Father is untrue. Whereas the resurrection put the Divine seal to His claims, and made manifest His own Divine attributes. By it God declared before all the worlds that He was all that He professed to be, and had done what He professed to do; that His life and teaching contained a true revelation of the Divine character; that He had opened a way of access to God through the atonement which He had offered for the sins of the world; that through Him the love of God was free to our fallen race; that in Him there was pardon and life for mankind sinners. All this, if His miracles had not previously made it manifest, was clearly revealed in the light which shone on the sepulchre on that first Easter morning. But oh the joy which comes to us from that deserted grave! "The Lord is risen indeed!" Then woe unto those by whom His overtures of mercy are rejected and His authority set at nought. As the conqueror of death no one can successfully resist His will. The power which rifled the grave can crush the proudest rebel. (*W. Landels.*) *Christ's resurrection:—*I. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST IS A PIVOTAL FACT. The key-stone of Christ's religion. All turns upon this. Either Jesus rose, or else He is an impostor, and imposture in one thing makes Him false in all. Take away the resurrection, and there is no link left between heaven and earth: preaching is a lie, faith is idle, happy dying is a delusion, and happy living is a greater fiction still. But, with St. Paul, we may challenge the world to disprove the assertion in the text. II. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST WAS A MIRACLE. Otherwise impossible. Nature possesses no power to raise a dead body. But once admit that the work is God's, and all difficulty disappears. III. WHAT THE RESURRECTION BODY WAS. The same palpable and substantial frame which quivered on the cross. I argue this—1. From the fact that He prophesied His own personal resurrection, in His own proper identity. 2. From the fact that the disciples recognized that identity, though reluctantly. 3. From the fact that He recognized His own identity. (*T. Armitage, D.D.*) *The resurrection of Christ:—*I. HIS RESURRECTION IS THE PLEDGE OF OURS. 1. First, because He promised that it should be—"because I live, ye shall live also." His human nature was the grain of seed (John xii.) which, sown by the hand of God in the field of the world, was to fructify in death, to bear a thousandfold in resurrection. He linked our nature with His. It was united not for a season, but for

ever. 2. But we have, secondly, more than the identity of our nature with His, to establish the fact that in His resurrection we have the pledge of our own. We need to be assured that His triumph will avail for us; and we are. In His hands (Rev. i. 18), we are told, are placed "the keys of death and hell." No longer is death in Satan's power; he was compelled to surrender his dominion to the Saviour. II. We proceed to view our Lord's resurrection as **THE PATTERN OF OURS**. To be raised in the lowest character in which it were possible, would be an exaltation too glorious to be understood in our present humiliation. Let us examine a few of the particulars of resemblance between His resurrection and ours. 1. And, first, He retained the identity of His person. No change passed upon Him, save that round His humanity glory appeared, like that, perhaps, which He wore for a season on the Mount of Transfiguration. And we, too, shall rise, in the likeness of His resurrection, our very selves. 2. We shall be raised, too, by the same instrumentality. We are told by the Saviour that He had power to lay down His life, and power to take it up again. We are nowhere told that He did so; on the contrary, it is plainly declared that He was not His own deliverer from the prison-house of death. He is said, in the first of Peter, the third chapter, at the eighteenth verse, to have been "quickened by the Spirit"; and again, in the eighth chapter of Romans, the second verse, to have been raised by the Father. Hence it is evident that God the Father was the Author, and God the Spirit the Agent of the resurrection of Christ. If it should be asked, "Why is it so?" the answer is, that Christ came to fulfil all the conditions of our salvation; He must be "made like unto His brethren in all things," and therefore in His resurrection. 3. Angels were employed instrumentally in the resurrection of Christ; and they will be in ours. Wherefore is the Lord of Hosts indebted to an angel's hand for His deliverance? Why does not the prison door fly open as the God-Man awakens from His death-sleep? Why? Because He must "fulfil all righteousness"; He must travel back to the glory He had left in the character of those He ransomed; He must submit to every condition of that covenant by which the ransomed fallen are to enter into life; He must, in short, return to glory as a Man. III. We come to speak upon some of **THE EFFECTS OF THE SAVIOUR'S RESURRECTION**. These we regard in a twofold aspect. 1. As the resurrection affects our present relation to God. The atonement and resurrection of Christ are inseparably connected. We take but a defective view of the atonement when we limit it to the work wrought on Calvary; nay, we will say, that if the work of the Saviour ended here, there could have been no atonement. The work was commenced on Calvary—it is completed in heaven. Without the resurrection there could be no triumph over death, no entrance into glory, and hence no atonement available for our entering where Christ had not gone before. 2. But there is another and most important way in which the tidings of our text affect us. We stand in the same position as Israel of old occupied on the day of atonement, as regards our justification our privileges in other respects exceed. We have lost more than God's favour in the fall; we have lost our right of access to Him. A rebel may be pardoned, and fully pardoned, and yet never find access to the royal presence. It was so with Israel; they approached God only through the person of their high priest. Ours is the high and holy privilege of access to God. 3. We connect the resurrection of Christ with our own; not as regards its reality for this we have done before, but its glory. But what can we say of this? To tell of the glory which shall burst upon a waiting Church in the resurrection morning, would be to describe that sun which shall no more go down; it would be to fathom the perfections of that God whose glory fills heaven and earth. In conclusion: There is not a being in the universe which will not be affected by the resurrection of Jesus. (A. C. Carr, M.A.) *The necessity of Christ's resurrection*:—The resurrection of Christ was necessary—1. In order to the atonement. 2. In order to the holiness of the believer. 3. In order to the salvation of the Church. (M. H. Seymour, M.A.)

Vers. 36-49. Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them.—*The first appearance of the risen Lord to the eleven*:—**THE CERTAINTY OF OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION**. No fact in history is better attested. 1. Observe, that when this person appeared in the room, the first token that it was Jesus was His speech: they were to have the evidence of hearing: He used the same speech. No sooner did He appear than He spoke. His first accents must have called to their minds those cheering notes with which He had closed His last address. They must have recognised that charming voice. He was a peace-maker, and a peace-giver, and by this sign they were given

to discern their Leader. I want you to notice that this evidence was all the better, because they themselves evidently remained the same men as they had been. "They were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit"; and thus they did exactly what they had done long before when He came to them walking on the waters. They are not carried away by enthusiasm, nor wafted aloft by fanaticism; they are not even as yet upborne by the Holy Spirit into an unusual state of mind, but they are as slow of heart and as fearful as ever they were. If they are convinced that Jesus has risen from the dead, depend upon it, it must be so. 2. Thus far in the narrative they had received the evidence of their ears, and that is by no means weak evidence; but now they are to have the evidence of sight; for the Saviour says to them, "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself"; "and when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet." John says also "His side," which he specially noted because he had seen the piercing of that side, and the outflow of blood and water. They were to see and identify that blessed Body which had suffered death. 3. Furthermore, that they might be quite sure, the Lord invited them to receive the evidence of touch or feeling. He called them to a form of examination, from which, I doubt not, many of them shrank; He said, "Handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." The saints are not at the coming of their Lord to remain disembodied spirits, nor to wear freshly created bodies, but their entire manhood is to be restored, and to enjoy endless bliss. It will be of a material substance also; for our Saviour's Body was material, since He said, "Handle Me, and see that it is I Myself; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." 4. Still further to confirm the faith of the disciples, and to show them that their Lord had a real Body, and not the mere form of one, He gave them evidence which appealed to their common sense. He said, "Have ye any meat; and they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it and did eat before them." This was an exceedingly convincing proof of His unquestionable resurrection. In very deed and fact, and not in vision and phantom, the Man who had died upon the cross stood among them. II. OUR LORD'S CHARACTER WHEN RISEN FROM THE DEAD. 1. Notice, first, that in this appearance of Christ we are taught that He is still anxious to create peace in the hearts of His people. No sooner did He make Himself visible than He said, "Peace be unto you." He has not lost His tender care over the least of the flock; He would have each one led by the still waters, and made to lie down in green pastures. 2. Note again, that He has not lost His habit of chiding unbelief, and encouraging faith; for as soon as He has risen, and speaks with His disciples, He asks them, "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" He loves you to believe in Him, and be at rest. 3. Notice, next, that when the Saviour had risen from the dead, and a measure of His glory was upon Him, He was still most condescendingly familiar with His people. He showed them His hands and His feet, and He said, "Handle Me, and see." 4. The next thing is that the risen Lord was still wonderfully patient, even as He had always been. He bore with their folly and infirmity; for "while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered," He did not chide them. 5. Observe that our Saviour, though He was risen from the dead, and therefore in a measure in His glory, entered into the fullest fellowship with His own. Peter tells us that they did eat and drink with Him. I do not notice in this narrative that He drank with them, but He certainly ate of such food as they had, and this was a clear token of His fellowship with them. 6. Let me call your attention to the fact that when Jesus had risen from the dead, He was just as tender of Scripture as He was before His decease. 7. Once again, our Saviour, after He had risen from the dead, showed that He was anxious for the salvation of men; for it was at this interview that He breathed upon the apostles, and bade them receive the Holy Ghost, to fit them to go forth and preach the gospel to every creature. III. The light which is thrown by this incident upon the NATURE OF OUR OWN RESURRECTION. 1. First, I gather from this text that our nature, our whole humanity, will be perfected at the day of the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, when the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we that may then be alive shall be changed. Jesus has redeemed not only our souls, but our bodies. 2. I gather next that in the resurrection our nature will be full of peace. Jesus Christ would not have said, "Peace be unto you," if there had not been a deep peace within Himself. He was calm and undisturbed. There was much peace about His whole life; but after the resurrection His peace becomes very conspicuous. There is no striving with scribes and Pharisees, there is no battling with anybody after our Lord is risen. Such shall be our life, we

shall be flooded with eternal peace, and shall never again be tossed about with trouble, and sorrow, and distress, and persecution. 3. When we rise again our nature will find its home amid the communion of saints. When the Lord Jesus Christ had risen again His first resort was the room where His disciples were gathered. His first evening was spent among the objects of His love. Even so, wherever we are we shall seek and find communion with the saints. 4. Furthermore, I see that in that day our bodies will admirably serve our spirits. For look at our Lord's Body. Now that He has risen from the dead He desires to convince His disciples, and His Body becomes at once the means of His argument, the evidence of His statement. His flesh and bones were text and sermon for Him. 5. In that day, beloved, when we shall rise again from the dead, we shall remember the past. Do you not notice how the risen Saviour says, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you." He had not forgotten His former state. It is rather a small subject, and probably we shall far more delight to dwell on the labours of our Redeemer's hands and feet; but still we shall remember all the way whereby the Lord our God led us, and we shall talk to one another concerning it. 6. Observe that our Lord, after He had risen from the dead, was still full of the spirit of service, and therefore He called others out to go and preach the gospel, and He gave them the Spirit of God to help them. When you and I are risen from the dead, we shall rise full of the spirit of service. He will use us in the grand economy of future manifestations of His Divine glory. Possibly we may be to other dispensations what the angels have been to this. Be that as it may, we shall find a part of our bliss and joy in constantly serving Him who has raised us from the dead. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

A Divine visitation:—I. WHEN HE APPEARED. 1. When they had been acting unworthily by fleeing from Him at His betrayal, and deserting Him at His trial. 2. When they were unprepared, and unbelieving, doubting His express promise, and refusing the testimony of His messengers. 3. When they greatly needed His presence, for they were like sheep without a shepherd. 4. When they were exercising the little life they had by coming together in loving assembly. So far they were doing well, and acting in a way which was likely to bring blessing. 5. When they were lamenting His absence, and thus proving their desire after Him. This is an admirable means of gaining His presence. 6. When certain among them were testifying concerning Him. Are not we in a similar condition? May we not hopefully look for our Lord's manifestation of Himself? II. *WHAT HE SAID.* "Peace be unto you." 1. It was a benediction: He wished them peace. 2. It was a declaration: they were at peace with God. 3. It was a fiat; He inspired them with peace. 4. It was an absolution: He blotted out all offences which might have spoiled their peace. III. *WHAT CAME OF HIS APPEARING.* 1. He banished their doubts. Even Thomas had to shake off his obstinate unbelief. 2. He revealed and sealed His love upon their hearts by showing them His hands and His feet. 3. He refreshed their memories. "These are the words which I spake unto you" (verse 44). 4. He opened their understandings (verse 45). 5. He showed them their position. "Ye are witnesses of these things" (verse 48). 6. He filled them with joy (John xx. 20). *Peace be unto you.—Peace bestowed upon man:—I.* Notice the nature of the blessing which the Lord Jesus proclaims. It is the blessing of "Peace." II. We observe the peculiar connection which the Redeemer implies this blessing to possess with Himself. He comes to them as the author of peace; and the peace which He wishes for them, He Himself gives. 1. Let it be considered that reconciliation with God arises wholly and exclusively from the sacrificial efficacy of the Saviour's sufferings. 2. Not only is reconciliation secured entirely by the sacrificial efficacy of His sufferings, but from the Lord Jesus Christ proceeds the mission of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to apply actually to men the various blessings of redemption. III. The animating influence which the Lord Jesus designs a participation of this blessing to exercise over all those by whom it is enjoyed. 1. The possession of this spiritual peace is designed to act as a preservative against temptation. 2. As designed to be a consolation amidst sorrow. 3. As designed to be an incentive to activity. 4. As an exciting cause of gratitude. (J. Parsons.)

The timely presence and salvation of Jesus:—I. With reference to THE CHARACTER OF THE VISIT we may remark, that the visits which Christ makes to His Churches are of two kinds. He sometimes comes in anger, to chastise them. In this manner He threatened to visit some of the Asiatic Churches. At other times He visits His Churches in a gracious manner, to comfort, animate, and bless them. This is evident, in the first place, from the language in which He addressed them; Peace be with you. This

as no mere formal greeting on His lips, but the expression of a genuine desire for their welfare. Nay, more; it was an assurance that peace existed between God and man. Nor was this all: it was also the bestowment of His peace upon them.

I. THE TIME WHEN THIS GRACIOUS VISIT WAS MADE. 1. It was made at a time when the disciples were exceedingly unworthy of such a favour, and when they rather deserved to have been visited in anger. They had treated Him in a very unkind and ungrateful manner. 2. It was made at a time when the Church was very imperfectly prepared for it, and when very few among them expected it, or had any hope of such a favour. 3. The time when Christ made this gracious visit to His Church was a time in which it was very much needed. The faith, and hope, and courage of its members were reduced to the lowest point of depression, and unless revived by His presence, must soon have expired. 4. This visit was made at a time when the Church was employed in exerting the little life which yet remained among them, and in using proper means to increase it. Though assembling at this time was dangerous, so that they did not dare to meet openly, yet they did assemble, and they assembled in the character of Christ's disciples. This proved the existence of a bond of union among them, which drew them together. This bond of union consisted in sympathy of feeling. They all felt the same affections, the same apprehensions and anxieties, and the same sorrows, and all their thoughts centred in one object. This object was their crucified Master. 5. The gracious visit appears to have been made the very first time that the Church met after Christ's resurrection. This circumstance is highly indicative of His affection for them, of His unwillingness to leave them mourning one moment longer than was necessary, and of His strong desire to be again in the midst of them. We remark lastly, that this gracious visit was made on the Lord's day. And the next visit which He made to His Church was made on the next Lord's day. My brethren, should He not favour us with His presence on this occasion, let us consider this evil as the cause of His absence, and set ourselves to remove it without delay. (*E. Payson, D.D.*)

*The mission and equipment of the disciples:—*I. THE SALUTATION—"Peace be unto you." These words were, no doubt, meant to allay the fears which were then agitating the disciples' minds. In themselves they were fitted to have this effect, as showing the spirit and purpose with which He had come among them. But they were also, and still more, fitted to have this effect, because of what they brought to their remembrance. They were, in fact, like His wounds, signs by which they might identify the risen Lord. The twofold utterance of this salutation is not without significance. As Luke tells us, "The disciples had beheld, touched, and gladly received their rebuke; but there is again a wondering among them before the final clear and tranquil assurance fills their hearts. As before through fear, so now through astonished joy, they cannot altogether and fully believe." Their joy, though it has actual faith in it, "does not reach to peace and joy combined in their fullness." It has "in its first vehemence and disquietude too little peace." It is a "violent joy, in which, notwithstanding its semblance of overpowering feeling, a deep and firm faith can scarcely fix its roots. Therefore the wise and patient Master gradually brings them to the peace of faith." But we unduly limit the significance and scope of these words, if we view them only as designed to remove the fears of the disciples. Rather are we to regard them as the salutation which His resurrection brings to those for whom He died—the message borne by His wounds to all who look to Him for salvation. This resurrection as plainly as His advent proclaims, "peace on earth and goodwill to men." II. THE SENDING—"As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." This was fitly preceded by the salutation, inasmuch as the man who is to be the herald of peace to others needs to enjoy peace himself. How great the honour which He puts upon His servants in thus comparing their mission with His own! And we offer the following remarks, not as exhaustive, but only as possible helps to the interpretation: 1. That they are, in some measure, to represent Him before men even as He represented the Father, giving men, both by their life and their teaching, a representation of His character, so as to enable them to form a conception of what He was. Such was unquestionably their calling. They were to be living epistles of Christ. He was to live in them. 2. That they receive authority from Him in some measure, as He received authority from His Father. They speak in His name, as He spoke in His Father's name. They do His works, as He did the works of His Father. 3. That they are to be His messengers to mankind, as He was the Father's messenger, taking up and publishing among the nations the gospel which He first proclaimed. 4. That they are to prosecute their work in the same spirit as He did—a spirit of

self-denial and benevolence, seeking not their own gratification, but the glory of God and the salvation of men. 5. That they must seek to do their work by the same instrumentality—not with carnal weapons, but by the spiritual forces which are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds—not depending on human might or power, but on the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. 6. That they are to be in the world as He was—in it, though not of it—seeking no portion in it, nor making it their rest—desirous of remaining in it only while they have work to do—glad to leave it when their work is done. Such are some of the things which may be implied in their being sent by Him as He was sent by the Father. III. THE ENDOWMENT—"He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." IV. THE MOMENTOUS WORK TO BE DONE—"Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." (*W. Landels.*) Behold My hands and My feet.—*Jesus on the evening of Easter Day*:—I. Here we note first of all our LORD'S INDULGENT TREATMENT OF MISTAKES AND IMPERFECTIONS IN RELIGIOUS BELIEF. We may venture to say that the disciples, seeing our Lord in the midst of them, ought to have recognized Him at once. They knew, from long companionship with Him, that there were no discoverable limits to His power over life and nature. That our Lord held His disciples responsible for such knowledge as this is plain from the words which He had used, earlier in the afternoon, when addressing the two on the Emmaus road; and from St. Mark we learn that on this occasion, too, He "upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart." Yet, looking to St. Luke's report, what tender censure it is! Here certainly is no expression which betrays grief or anger. He meets their excitement with the mildest rebuke—if it be a rebuke. "Why are ye disquieted? and why do critical reasonings arise in your hearts?" He traces their trouble of heart to its true source—the delusion which possessed their understandings about His being only a "spirit." In His tenderness He terms their unworthy dread a mere disquietude of the heart; they are on a false track, and He will set them right. What a lesson is here for all who, whether as fathers and mothers, or teachers, or clergymen, have upon their hands the immense responsibility of imparting religious truth to others! The first condition of successful teaching is patient sympathy with the difficulties of the learner. A great master was once asked, "What is the first condition of successful teaching?" "Patience," he said. "What is the second?" "Patience." "What is the third?" He paused, then said, "Sympathy." And what a rebuke is here on the want of considerateness, of courtesy, of generosity, which so often disfigures our modern treatment of real or supposed religious error! Who can wonder at our failures to convince, when our methods are so unlike that of the Great Teacher! II. Here, too, we see our LORD'S SANCTION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF INQUIRY INTO THE FOUNDATIONS OF OUR RELIGIOUS BELIEF. Undoubtedly the understanding has great and exacting duties towards Revealed Truth. If God speaks, the least that His rational creatures can do is to try to understand Him. And therefore, as the powers of the mind gradually unfold themselves, the truths of religion ought to engage an increasing share of each of them, and not least of the understanding. What too often happens is, that while a young man's intelligence is interesting itself more and more in a widening circle of subjects, it takes no account of religion. The old childish thoughts about religion lie shrivelled up in some out-of-the-way corner of a powerful and accomplished mind, the living and governing powers of which are engaged in other matters. Then, the man for the first time in his life meets with some sceptical book; and he brings to bear on it the habits of thought and judgment which have been trained in the study of widely different matters. He forms, he can form, no true estimate of a subject, so unlike any he has really taken in hand before: he is at the mercy of his new instructor, since he knows nothing that will enable him to weigh the worth or the worthlessness of startling assertions. He makes up his mind that science has at length spoken on the subject of religion; and he turns his back, with a mingled feeling of irritation and contempt, on the truths which he learned at his mother's knee. This is no imaginary case; and among the reasons which go to explain so sad a catastrophe, this, I say, is one; that the understanding has not been properly developed in the boy and the young man, with relation to religious truth. What is the law of that development? It is this: that as the mind grows, it learns to reinforce the teaching of authority by the inquiries of reverent reason. But do not suppose that, because it condescends to be thus tested by your understanding as regards its reality, it is therefore within the compass of your understanding as regards its scope. It begins with that which

you can appraise; it ends in that which is beyond you: because while you are finite and bounded in your range of vision, it is an unveiling of the Infinite, of the Incomprehensible. III. Once more, NOTE HERE THE DIRECTION WHICH OUR LORD PURPOSELY GAVE TO THE THOUGHTS OF HIS PERPLEXED DISCIPLES. He does not turn them in upon themselves; He does not take their trouble, so to speak, sympathetically to pieces, and deal with its separate elements; He does not refute one by one the false reasonings which arise within them. He does not say to them, "These disquietudes, these doubts, are mere mental disorders, or interesting experiences, and the mind itself can cure diseases which the mind has produced." He would, on the contrary, have them escape from themselves; from the thick jungle of their doubts and fears and hopes and surmises: and come to Him. Whatever they may think, or feel; He is there, seated on a throne which enthusiasm did not raise, and which doubt cannot undermine; in His own calm, assured, unassailable Life. "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a mere spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." Let us remind ourselves that whether we believe them or not, the facts of the Christian creed are true; and that faith only receives, but that it cannot possibly create or modify Christ and His gifts. Whether men believe or not in His eternal person, in the atoning virtue of His death, in the sanctifying influences of His Spirit, in the invigorating grace of His sacraments—these are certain truths. They are utterly independent of the hesitations and vacillations of our understandings about them. To ourselves, indeed, it is of great moment whether we have faith or not: to Him, to His truth, to His gifts, it matters not at all. "The Lord sitteth above this waterflood" of our changing and inconstant mental impressions; "the Lord remaineth a King for ever." "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself." (*Canon Liddon.*) *The reality of the resurrection:*—I. THE NATURE OF OUR LORD'S RISEN BODY. It was the Body which had been born of the Virgin Mary, and had been nailed to the cross; the Body from which life had been expelled by the painful death of crucifixion, ere it had been buried in the grave of Joseph of Arimathea. This identity is insisted on by our Lord. "I Myself." "Flesh and bones." Our Lord's risen body, then, was literally the very body which had been crucified; and yet it had properties attaching to it which distinguished it. It was sown a natural body, that is a body governed by ordinary natural laws; and raised a spiritual body, that is, a body which, while retaining physical substance and unimpaired identity, was yet endowed and interpenetrated with some of the properties of spirit. II. Now, corresponding to the twofold character of our Lord's risen Body, visible and palpable on the one hand, and spiritual on the other, is THE CHARACTER OF THE RELIGION WHICH REPRESENTS HIM AMONG MEN. Religion is like a sacrament: it has its outward and visible signs and its inward fact, or thing signified. Of these, the latter is, beyond dispute, the more important. Religion, the bond between the soul and God, lives in the habits, or acts, whereby the soul adheres to, and communes with, the Infinite Source of life. It is made up of faith, hope, and love, pouring themselves forth at the feet of the Invisible King; it is by turns aspiration, worship, resolve; it expends itself in a thousand unheard, unuttered acts, whereby the human spirit holds converse with its Creator. Religion is thus in its essence altogether removed from the province of sense; we cannot feel, or see, or hear, these acts of the soul, which assert its presence. It belongs to the purely immaterial world; it is hid with the Father, who seeth in secret, and who is worshipped, if at all, in spirit and truth. On the other hand, religion has another aspect. It steps forth from the sphere of the supersensuous, which is its congenial home; it takes bodily form and mien, and challenges the senses of hearing, and sight, and touch. It appeals through the human voice to the ear of sense. It meets and fascinates the eye; it even presents itself, as in the outward elements of a sacrament, to the touch. It is represented by a visible society—the Church. This society has its ministers, its assemblies for worship, its characteristic rites, its public buildings—all of which fall within the province of sense. The visible Church is, as our Lord said, a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid. Again, religion is represented by a book—the Bible. The Bible, too, belongs to the world of sense, just as much as the Church. We see it, handle it, read it. It brings religion visibly into the area of history, of poetry, of philosophy, as embodied in a large ancient literature. In the same way, religion takes an outward shape in the good works and characters of individual Christians. They arrest observation; they invite comment, examination, discussion; they belong just as much to the public life of mankind as do the lives of worldly or wicked men. By them, too, Jesus Himself stands

in the midst of human society. In short, religion in the world has this double character—outward and inward. III. OUR LORD'S PRECEPT, "HANDLE ME, AND SEE," IS ADDRESSED TO TWO DIFFERENT CLASSES OF MEN. 1. It is an encouragement for the timid. 2. It is a direction for the perplexed. (*Ibid.*)

The wounds of Jesus :—I wish to draw your attention to the simple fact that our Lord Jesus Christ, when He rose again from the dead, had in His body the marks of His passion. If He had pleased He could readily have removed them. I. OF WHAT USE WAS THE EXHIBITION OF THOSE WOUNDS TO THE DISCIPLES? They were infallible proofs that He was the same person. Had not some such evidence been visible upon our Saviour, it is probable that His disciples would have been unbelieving enough to doubt the identity of His person. But, now, think! If Christ had to undergo in His countenance those matchless transformations, that must have been, first of all, connected with His bloody sweat, then, with His agony, and after that, with the transforming, or, if I may use such a word, the transmutation of His body into a spiritual body, can you not conceive that His likeness would be changed, that the disciples would scarcely know Him if there had not been some deeply graven marks whereby they would be able to discover Him? The disciples looked upon the very face, but, even then they doubted. There was a majesty about Him which most of them had not seen. Peter, James, and John, had seen Him transfigured, when His garments were whiter than any fuller could make them; but the rest of the disciples had only seen Him as a man of sorrows; they had not seen Him as the glorious Lord, and, therefore, they would be apt to doubt whether He was the same. But these nail-prints, this pierced side, these were marks which they could not dispute, which unbelief itself could not doubt. II. Let us turn to the second question: WHY SHOULD CHRIST WEAR THESE WOUNDS IN HEAVEN, AND OF WHAT AVAIL ARE THEY? 1. I can conceive, first, that the wounds of Christ in heaven will be a theme of eternal wonder to the angels. 2. Again, Christ wears these scars in His Body in heaven as His ornaments. The wounds of Christ are His glories, they are His jewels and His precious things. 3. Nor are these only the ornaments of Christ: they are His trophies—the trophies of His love. Have you never seen a soldier with a gash across his forehead or in his cheek? Why every soldier will tell you the wound in battle is no disfigurement—it is his honour. 4. Another reason why Jesus wears His wounds is, that when He intercedes He may employ them as powerful advocates. When He rises up to pray for His people, He needs not speak a word; He lifts His hands before His Father's face; He makes bare His side, and points to His feet. These are the orators with which He pleads with God—these wounds. Oh, He must prevail. 5. Jesus Christ appears in heaven as the Wounded One, this shows again that He has not laid aside His priesthood. If the wounds had been removed we might have forgotten that there was a Sacrifice; and, mayhap, next we might have forgotten that there was a Priest. But the wounds are there: then there is a Sacrifice, and there is a Priest also, for He who is wounded is both Himself the Sacrifice and the Priest. 6. There is another and terrible reason why Christ wears His wounds still. It is this. Christ is coming to judge the world. Christ has with Himself to-day the accusers of His enemies. And when Christ shall come a second time to judge the world in righteousness, seated on the great white throne, that hand of His shall be the terror of the universe. "They shall look on Him whom they have pierced," and they shall mourn for their sins. They would not mourn with hopeful penitence in time; they shall mourn with sorrowful remorse throughout eternity. III. WHAT DOES CHRIST MEAN BY SHOWING TO US HIS HANDS AND FEET? 1. He means this, that suffering is absolutely necessary. Christ is the head, and His people are the members. If suffering could have been avoided, surely our glorious Head ought to have escaped; but inasmuch as He shows us His wounds, it is to tell us that we shall have wounds too. 2. But next He teaches us His sympathy with us in our suffering. "There," says He, "see this hand! I am not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of your infirmities. I have suffered, too. I was tempted in all ways like as you are. Look here! there are the marks—there are the marks. They are not only tokens of My love, they are not only sweet forget-me-nots that bind Me to love you for ever. But besides that they are the evidence of My sympathy. I can feel for you. Look—look—I have suffered. Have you the heart-ache? Ah, look you here, what a heart-ache I had when this heart was pierced. Do you suffer, even unto blood wrestling against sin? So did I. I have sympathy with you." 3. Christ wears these wounds to show that suffering is an honourable thing. To suffer for Christ is glory. 4. Lastly, there is one sweet thought connected with the

wounds of Christ that has charmed my soul, and made my heart run over with delight. It is this: I have sometimes thought that if I am a part of Christ's Body, I am a poor wounded part; if I do belong to that all-glorious whole, the Church, which is His fulness, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all, yet have I said within me, "I am a poor maimed part, wounded, full of putrifying sores." But Christ did not leave even His wounds behind Him; even those He took to heaven. "Not a bone of Him shall be broken," and the flesh when wounded shall not be discarded—shall not be left. He shall carry that with Him to heaven, and He shall glorify even the wounded member. Is not this sweet, is not this precious to the troubled child of God? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The crucial test*:—In an old legend it is said that Satan once appeared to an old saint and said, "I am Christ," when the saint confounded him, and exposed his pretensions, as he said, "Then where are the nail-prints?" (*H. O. Mackey.*) They yet believed not for joy.—*Primitive doubtings and their cure*:—I. THE DOUBTS OF THE DISCIPLES. II. THE LORD'S WAY OF MEETING THE DOUBTS OF THE DISCIPLES—"He showed them His hands and His feet." Strange as this kind of recognition, this way of fixing the doubted identity, may seem, it was satisfactory. The mother in the story knew her long-lost child by the scar on the shoulder received in infancy; so was the Son of God recognized by the nail-prints and the bruises of the Cross. But did the disciples need this? Were the loved features not the same as ever? Were the eyes that wept over Jerusalem not the same as before; or had the grave robbed them of their tenderness and lustre? Were the lips, from which came the gracious words of parting love, not the same as in the upper chamber at the last supper? Was the voice so altered, that they did not know its tones? No. These resemblances might all be recognized; but so many things threw doubt upon these recognitions. It is, then, to remove all doubt that He exhibits the marks of His Passion. And in doing so, He shows us the true way of dispelling doubt, of whatever kind it may be, viz., the fuller knowledge of Himself, as the dead, the buried, the risen, and living Christ. It is this that is the cure of all unbelief, the death of doubting, the cherisher of faith, the perpetual source of stability and peace; for the real cause of all doubting is imperfect knowledge of the Lord. (*H. Bonar, D.D.*) *Too good to be true*:—In the case before us, the disciples saw Christ manifestly before their eyes. To a certain extent they believed in His resurrection; that belief gave them joy, and at once that very joy made them unbelieving. They looked again; they believed once more; anon, a wave of joy rolled right over the head of their faith, and then afresh their doubts returned. If God had been half as merciful or a tithe as kind as He was, I could have believed it, but such exceeding riches of His grace were too much; such out-doings of Himself in goodness, such giving exceeding abundantly above what one could ask or even think, seemed too much to believe. We will at once attempt to deal with this temptation. I. To begin, LET ME ACCOUNT FOR IT. 1. It is little marvel that the spirit is amazed even to astonishment and doubt when you think of the greatness of the things themselves. The black sinner says, "My iniquity is great; I deserve the wrath of God; the gospel presents me with a pardon, full and complete. I have laboured to wash out these stains, but they will not disappear; the gospel tells me that the precious blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin." 2. Another reason for incredulity may be found in our sense of unworthiness. Note the person that receives these mercies, and you will not wonder that he believes not for joy. "Ah," saith he, "if these things were given to the righteous I could believe it, but to me, an old offender, to me, a hard-hearted despiser of the overflowing love of God that cannot be!" 3. Add to these the strange terms upon which God presents these things to poor sinners. The miracle of the manner equals the marvel of the matter. No works; simply trust thy soul with Christ. 4. And add to this one more thought—the method by which God proposes to work all this; that is to say, He proposes to pardon, and to justify the sinner instantaneously. II. Having thus tried to account for this state of the heart, may I have the help of God while I try to DO BATTLE WITH THE EVIL THAT IS IN IT, THAT WE MAY BE ABLE TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST! 1. Troubled heart, let me remind thee, first of all, that thou hast no need to doubt the truth of the precious revelation because of its greatness, for He is a great God who makes it to thee. Let no low thoughts of God come in to make you doubt His power to save you. 2. Again, let me remind you that the greatness of God's mercy should encourage you to believe that it comes from God. 3. Let me remind you again, that you may get another argument to put an end to your fears about the greatness of God's mercy from the greatness of His providence. III. I close by USING YOUR VERY FEARS AS AN ENTICEMENT TO BELIEVE.

If it be so joyous only to think of these things, what must it be to possess them? If it gives such a weight to thy spirit only to think of being pardoned, adopted, accepted, and saved, what must it be really to be washed? (C. H. Spurgeon.)

The final recorded meeting in Jerusalem:—I. CONSIDER THE WAITING (see Acts i. 4). II. THE PROMISED BAPTISM (see Acts i. 5). III. CHRIST'S EXEGESIS, OR EXPLANATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. 1. Reminds them of former teaching. 2. Law, prophets, Psalms, &c., must be understood of Him. IV. THE OPENING OF THEIR UNDERSTANDING. V. THE COMPREHENSIVE CHARACTER OF CHRIST'S COMMISSION. 1. Repentance. 2. Remission of sins. 3. In His name. Christ the sole hope. 4. Among all nations. Missions an essential part of the Church. 5. Beginning at Jerusalem. VI. THE DISPENSATION OF THE GOSPEL COMMITTED TO THEM. VII. TARRYING AT JERUSALEM. "Tarrying," when done because of faith, is a fine proof of faith, and strengthens prayer, and is an exercise of humility. (G. Venables, S.C.L.)

The Saviour's last words:—I. ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES. 1. Prophetic. (1) The books of Divine origin. (2) Its writers holy men. 2. Messianic. (1) In their spirit. (2) In their letter. (3) In their symbols. 3. Harmonic. (1) Moses, the prophets, and psalms distinct chords of one Christly anthem. (2) This wondrous unity of the Old Testament Scriptures an irrefragable proof of their essential divinity. II. ESSENTIAL NEED OF DIVINE ILLUMINATION TO UNDERSTAND THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES. 1. Suggested by Christ's exposition. 2. Proved in the disciples' experience. 3. Corroborated in all generations. III. ESSENTIAL PRE-REQUISITES FOR HUMAN SALVATION. 1. The death of Christ. 2. The resurrection of Christ. 3. Repentance and remission of sins. IV. AN ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC OF A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST. 1. To bear witness of personal salvation through Christ. 2. To bear witness of personal interest in the salvation of others. V. AN ESSENTIAL NEED FOR SUCCESSFUL WITNESSING FOR CHRIST. 1. This promise of the Father was the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts i. 8). 2. This gift of the Holy Spirit was to endue the disciples of Christ with power for testimony. 3. This endowment with the power of the Holy Spirit essential for successful bearing witness for Christ. Practical questions: 1. Are we all disciples of Christ? 2. Do we all bear witness for Jesus Christ? 3. Is our witnessing for Christ accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit? 4. If not, why not? (D. C. Hughes, M.A.)

The gospel for the world:—I. THE BASIS OF THE GOSPEL FOR THE WORLD. 1. This threefold division of the Scriptures suggestive in this connection. (1) As showing that Christ is the central glory of each and every part. (2) As showing in this the essential unity of all the parts. 2. The fulfilment of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures most important in the evangelization of the world. (1) Because it proves the Divine origin of the Scriptures. (2) Because it shows the Divine authority with which the Christ of the Scriptures is invested as the world's Saviour. II. THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE PROMULGATION OF THE GOSPEL TO THE WORLD. 1. A spiritual understanding of the Scriptures. (1) Concerning the fitness of a suffering and a triumphant Christ. (2) Concerning the essentials of gospel preaching. 2. Another qualification is Christian discipleship. 3. A third qualification is the special endowment of power. (1) This endowment of power by the Holy Spirit should be distinguished from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which is not a special, but general privilege of every Christian. (2) The condition for this endowment may be seen in the account given of the prayerful waiting therefor, before the day of Pentecost (Acts i. 12-14; ii. 1-4). III. THE RETURN OF CHRIST TO HEAVEN NECESSARY FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL IN THE WORLD. 1. The return of our Lord to heaven was necessary in order that the Holy Spirit might be sent. (John xvi. 7). 2. On the work of the Spirit depend the conviction and conversion of men, and the completion of the truth (John xvi. 8-14). IV. PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS. 1. The world's great need—the gospel of Christ. 2. The Church's great responsibility to supply this need. 3. The importance of being equipped. (Ibid.)

Then opened He their understanding.—*Christ illuminates the understanding*:—I. WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THIS ACT OF CHRIST? 1. It implies the transcendent nature of spiritual things, far exceeding the highest flight and reach of natural reason. 2. Christ's opening the understanding implies the insufficiency of all external means, how excellent soever they are in themselves to operate savingly upon men, till Christ by His power opens the soul, and so makes them effectual. 3. Christ's opening the understanding imports His Divine power, whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself. Who but God knows the heart? Who but God can unlock and open it at pleasure? II. BY WHAT

ACTS CHRIST PERFORMS THIS WORK. 1. By His Word. 2. By His Spirit. He breaks in upon the understanding and conscience by powerful convictions and compunctions (John xvi. 8). When this is done, the heart is opened: saving light now shines in it; and this light set up, the spirit in the soul is—1. A new light, in which all things appear far otherwise than they did before. The names “Christ” and “sin,” the words “heaven” and “hell” have another sound in that man’s ears, than formerly they had. 2. It is a very affecting light; a light that hath heat and powerful influences with it, which makes deep impressions on the heart. 3. And it is a growing light, like the light of the morning, which “shines more and more unto the perfect day” (Prov. iv. 18). Inferences: 1. If this be the work and office of Jesus Christ, to open the understandings of men; hence we infer the miseries that lie upon those men, whose understandings, to this day, Jesus Christ hath not opened; of whom we may say, as it is Deut. xxix. 4. 2. If Jesus Christ be the great Prophet of the Church, then surely He will take special care both of the Church and the under-shepherds appointed by Him to feed them. 3. Hence you that are yet in darkness, may be directed to whom to apply yourselves for saving knowledge. It is Christ that hath the sovereign eye-salve that can cure your blindness. 4. Since then there is a common light, and special saving light, which none but Christ can give, it is therefore the concernment of every one of you to try what your light is. “We know that we all have knowledge” (1 Cor. viii. 1). These lights differ—1. In their very kind and natures. The one is heavenly, supernatural, and spiritual; the other earthly and natural, the effect of a better constitution or education (James iii. 15, 17). 2. They differ most apparently in their effects and operations. The light that comes in a special way from Christ, is humbling, abasing, and soul-emptying light; by it a man feels the vileness of his own nature and practice, which begets self-loathing in him; but natural light, on the contrary, puffs up and exalts, makes the heart swell with self-conceitedness (1 Cor. viii. 1). The light of God is practical and operative, still urging the soul—yea, lovingly constraining it to obedience. 3. They differ in their issues. Natural common knowledge vanisheth, as the apostle speaks (1 Cor. xiii. 8). ’Tis but Mayflower, and dies in its month. “Doth not their excellency that is in them go away?” (Job iv. 21). But this that springs from Christ is perfected, not destroyed by death; it springs up into everlasting life. The soul in which it is subjected carries it away with it into glory. 5. How are they obliged to love, serve, and honour Jesus Christ, whom he hath enlightened with the saving knowledge of Himself? O that with hands and hearts lifted up to heaven, ye would adore the free grace of Jesus Christ to your souls! (*J. Flavel.*) *On the understanding of Scripture:*—I. OUR LORD DESIGNED TO PUT AN ESPECIAL HONOUR ON THE SCRIPTURES. He might have taught His disciples without them. He might have enabled them, by immediate inspiration, to understand all things which related to His person, His office, and Divine commission; to His death and sufferings, His resurrection, and the glory that should follow. But He chose rather to refer them to the living oracles, given by God unto their fathers. Let me solemnly ask you, beloved brethren, what value do you set upon the Scriptures? II. But, while vast numbers read not the Scriptures at all, MANY READ THEM, BUT UNDERSTAND THEM NOT. Their meaning is sealed up. If we would profit by the Scriptures, we must not read them like another book. III. That these remarks may be brought to some practical end, let us, finally, ask—Do we READ THE SCRIPTURES CONTINUALLY WITH THIS CONVICTION, THAT, WITHOUT THE TEACHING OF THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND THEM? It is our duty to search the Scriptures; it is the Lord alone who can enable us to understand them. 1. If this conviction be strong on our minds, it will lead us to read the Scriptures with earnest prayer. 2. Again, if we be under an abiding conviction that, without the teaching of the Spirit, we cannot understand the Scriptures, we shall read them with diligence and perseverance. 3. Once more, if we be deeply convinced of our need of the grace of God, we shall read the Scriptures with an obedient, humble, teachable spirit. (*E. Blencowe, M.A.*) *The understanding opened:*—I. THE CHANGE PRODUCED. The unlocking of the whole soul; the breaking down of all the barriers of pride, prejudice, and sin, which preclude the gospel, and prevent the cordial reception of its salutary truths. II. THE AUTHOR OF THIS CHANGE. The Lord Jesus Christ, by His Spirit. Inward illumination is necessary, because of—1. The insufficiency of human powers. 2. The inefficiency of outward means. III. THE END of this change; the object which its Divine Author particularly regards; and this is, a right acquaintance with the holy

Scriptures. "Then opened He their understanding"; why? to what end and purpose? "That they might understand the Scriptures." Here let it be carefully noted—the holy Scriptures are a complete revelation of the mind and will of God. But what is this understanding of the Scriptures, this right acquaintance with the Word of God, which evinces the teaching of the Spirit of Christ? 1. It is impressive. It is knowledge which touches and interests the heart. 2. It is progressive. The Spirit of Christ teaches gradually. "More and more unto the perfect day." 3. It is practical. This knowledge has influence on the spirit and conduct of men, an influence most salutary and important. (1) It humbles for sin. (2) It endears the Saviour. (3) It promotes holiness. From the whole we remark—1. The unhappy condition of those whose minds are yet closed against the light of the word and Spirit of Christ. Natural blindness is a melancholy affliction, but unspeakably more so this darkness of the soul! 2. The duty of such as desire Divine teaching. Think not highly of yourselves, but soberly as you ought to think. 3. The encouragement which the gospel gives to apply to Jesus Christ. This encouragement is large and free. (*T. Kidd.*) *Understanding the Scriptures:*—Whilst at prayer-meeting to-night, I learned more of the meaning of Scripture than ever before. Suitable frames of soul are like good lights, in which a painting appears to its full advantage. (*S. Pearse.*) *The opened understanding:*—This is in all probability as stupendous a miracle as any in the Lord's history. That men should in a moment receive a power of mental comprehension which they had not before, and that this power should enable them to see the true import and meaning of a book which had hitherto been closed to them, seems greater than any acts of healing, or feeding of multitudes, or stilling of tempests. It implies Divine power over our spiritual and intellectual nature such as God only can exercise. And yet it is the commonest of all miracles, and the one which survives amongst us. The opening of the mind and heart to the things of God is constantly now going on. To many—we may say to all—who submit their wills and understandings to God, the Scriptures are unlocked, a new light is shed upon every part of them, especially upon the works and words of the Lord. This power of a risen Christ we claim every time we put up to God one of the most familiar of all our prayers, that "by patience and comfort of His holy Word we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life" in Jesus Christ. (*M. F. Sadler.*) *Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer.*—*Christ's epitome of the gospel:*—I. THE GOSPEL IS HERE REPRESENTED AS THE OUTCOME OF THE LONG-CHERISHED PURPOSES OF GOD. It behoved Christ to suffer and to rise again, because it was included in God's redemptive purposes as revealed by His servants the prophets. Redemption was not an afterthought in the Divine mind. II. THE GOSPEL IS HERE REPRESENTED AS GROUNDING ITSELF IN TWO HISTORICAL FACTS: VIZ., ON THE SUFFERINGS AND THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST. III. THE GOSPEL, AS EXPRESSED IN THESE TWO FACTS, IS HERE REPRESENTED AS THE SUBJECT MATTER OF APOSTOLIC PREACHING. Why? Unquestionably, because they are the most vital and essential doctrines of Christianity. They lie at the root of all experimental religion. IV. THE GOSPEL IS HERE REPRESENTED AS EMBRACING IN ITS MERCIFUL DESIGNS THE ENTIRE HUMAN RACE. IT IS TO BE PREACHED "AMONG ALL NATIONS." V. THE GOSPEL IS HERE REPRESENTED AS OFFERING DIVINE MERCY TO THE CHIEF OF SINNERS. "Beginning at Jerusalem." (*W. H. C. Harris.*) *The principles and proclamation of the gospel:*—It would be difficult to find in the Word of God another paragraph which contains within itself more of the essential principles of the gospel than that to which this text belongs. I. THE GROUND ON WHICH THE GOSPEL PROCLAMATION RESTS: "It behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." There could have been no gospel if there had been no Cross; but the death, even of Jesus, would have had no efficacy for the removal of human guilt, if He had not risen from the grave. The one fact is invariably connected with the other in the Epistles. The honour of the law required a victim. Three doctrines unite to form a trinity of gospel truth: 1. The person of Christ as God incarnate. 2. The death of Christ as the sacrifice. 3. The resurrection of Christ as the witness to the other two doctrines. II. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE HERE DESCRIBED: "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name." It is a proclamation of the remission of sins. This pardon is—1. Full; 2. Free; 3. Immediate; 4. Irreversible. But it is not a proclamation of forgiveness alone. Two things, repentance and remission, are to go together. A man cannot have forgiveness and continue at the same time to indulge in sin. This mention of repentance is virtually the same thing as that

insistence on faith so constantly found in the New Testament. Faith is the Christward side of repentance. Repentance is the sinward side of faith. III. THE ORDER IN WHICH THIS PROCLAMATION IS TO BE MADE: "To all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." The reasons of "beginning at Jerusalem" were—1. To magnify the Divine mercy. 2. To secure a convincing illustration of the gospel's efficacy. 3. To establish a principle for the guidance of God's people in all ages. So the law is that our first efforts should begin in our own homes—"beginning at Jerusalem"—but we are not to be content with working there. We must look abroad also—"to all nations." (*W. M. Taylor, D.D.*) *Christ's sufferings, resurrection, &c.* :—I. THE EXPEDIENCY OF CHRIST'S SUFFERING AND RESURRECTION. 1. That prophecy might be fulfilled (Zech. xiii. 1). 2. That justice might be satisfied, and peace made (Rom. iii. 25, 26). 3. To convince and confound His adversaries. 4. To confirm the faith of His disciples. 5. To conquer sin, death, and grave. 6. That He might be the firstfruits. 7. That after abasement He might be exalted. II. THE BLESSED EFFECTS RESULTING. "That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." 1. The nature and necessity of repentance (Acts v. 31). 2. Full and free remission (Acts xiii. 39). 3. "In His name," or by His authority (Mark xvi. 15, 16). 4. Beginning at Jerusalem in the first place (Luke i. 72). 5. And carrying it to all nations. III. THE IMPROVEMENT. 1. The grace of Christ always prevents us (Luke xix. 10). 2. Repentance and remission of sins are the fruits of Christ's death and resurrection (Rom. viii. 33, 34). 3. Remission of sins also accompanied with the saving knowledge of salvation. 4. The gospel commission is without exception of nations, as God's people are in all nations. 5. Salvation is alone in the name of Christ. (*T. B. Baker.*) *Two supreme necessities* :—I. IT BEHOVED CHRIST TO SUFFER. 1. Because He must show the evil of sin; and this is only seen in its results. 2. Because He must vindicate the Divine honour; and this He could only do by bearing the penalty of sin. 3. Because His truth would oppose the natural inclinations of men, and they would be sure to make Him suffer. 4. Because He must render a perfect obedience to the Father; and this could only be tested and proved by suffering. II. IT BEHOVED CHRIST TO RISE. 1. Because His work was a commission, and some sign of its acceptance was needed. 2. Because His work was incomplete at death; part must be accomplished in renewed life. (*The Weekly Pulpit.*) *Christ's death and resurrection foretold in Scripture* :—I. THAT MESSIAH SHOULD SUFFER DEATH. 1. Foretold in the Pentateuch. (1) Gen. xxii. 18. (2) Sacrificial slaying of beasts. 2. Foretold in the Prophets (Isa. liii.; Dan. ix. 25, 26; Zech. xii. 10). 3. Foretold in the Psalms (Psa. xvi. 9, 10). II. THAT IT BEHOVED HIM ALSO TO RISE AGAIN. 1. This was first foreshown in the same story of Isaac, wherein his sacrifice or suffering was acted. For from the time that God commanded Isaac to be offered for a burnt-offering, Isaac was a dead man; but the third day he was released from death. This the text tells us expressly, that it was the third day when Abraham came to Mount Moriah, and had his son, as it were, restored to him again: which circumstance there was no need nor use at all to have noted, had it not been for some mystery. For had there been nothing intended but the naked story, what did it concern us to know whether it were the third or the fifth day that Abraham came to Moriah, where he received his son from death? (see Heb. xi. 17-19). The same was foreshowed by the law of sacrifices, which were to be eaten before the third day. Some sacrifices were to be eaten the same day they were offered; but those which were deferred longest, as the peace-offerings, were to be eaten before the third day. The third day no sacrifice might be eaten, but was to be burnt: if it were eaten, it was not accepted for an atonement, but counted an abomination. Namely, to show that the sacrifice of Messiah, which these sacrifices represented, was to be finished the third day by His rising from the dead: and therefore the type thereof determined within that time, beyond which time it was not accepted for atonement of sin, because then it was no longer a type of Him. 2. As for the prophets, I find no express prediction in them for the time of Christ's rising (for that of the case of the Prophet Jonah, I take to be rather an allusion then a prophecy) only in general, "That Christ should rise again," is implied both in that famous prophecy of Isa. liii., and that of Zech. xii. 3. I come to the Psalms, where not only His rising again is prophesied of, but the time thereof determined; though at first sight it appears not so: namely, in that fore-
alleged passage of the Sixteenth Psalm, "Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell, nor suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." All men shall rise again, but their bodies must first return to dust, and see corruption. But Messiah was to rise again before

He saw corruption. If before, then, the third day at farthest; for then the body naturally begins to see corruption. (*J. Mede.*) *Necessity for Christ's sufferings*:—Christ's sacrifice upon Calvary came along by a process of natural simplicity. His death is readily explicable, and yet after He died He said that that death was one of the foregone conclusions of history: "Thus it behoved Christ to suffer." Paul said "Christ must needs have suffered." "Must." It is well to think down deep thoughts into the "musts" of history. The ages were surveyed—using the word of the civil engineer—before they were peopled and built upon, and the points were fixed which now century by century God is covering with facts and events. (*C. H. Parkhurst.*) *Why it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise*:—I. To SUFFER. 1. It did not primarily behove Christ to suffer merely because the prophets had foretold that He should suffer and die; the necessity of His sufferings was rather the reason why prophets were directed to foretell a suffering Messiah. It behoved Him to suffer, that He might make a full and sufficient atonement for the sins of guilty man. It was the will of the Divine Father, and that will was sovereign and absolute, that Jehovah Jesus, the everlasting Son of the Father, should assume our nature, live in our world, and suffer in our stead. It was the voluntary engagement of the Son of God to accomplish His Father's will—"Lo! I come; in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God." 2. I grant you there are collateral reasons why it thus "behoved Christ to suffer." "Thus it behoved Him to suffer," that He might exhibit a perfect pattern of all excellence, and of patience in the midst of suffering. In all His condescension, in all His meekness, in all His forgiveness, in all His charity, He has taught us how to live and how to suffer; and "if we say we abide in Him, we ought to walk as He also walked." 3. "It behoved Him to suffer" in our nature, and in our world, that He might, in some sense, ennoble and dignify the path of poverty and of suffering. 4. "It behoved Him to suffer," that from personal experience in our nature and in our world, He might know how to sympathise with His suffering people. 5. "It behoved Him to suffer," preparatory to that glory to which, as Mediator, He was to be exalted. "Ought not Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory?" Not unfrequently does it happen, that the path of suffering is the high road to honour and glory; and never does true greatness appear in a light so impressive and interesting, as when seen grappling with difficulties, struggling with opposition, and ultimately rising superior to all. Through what a scene of suffering and agony and blood did our Divine Saviour pass, preparatory to entering into His glory! And when He arrived at the heavenly world, what an outburst of triumph and joy do we hear! "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." And let His suffering followers know, that if so be they suffer with Him, in His cause and in His state and temper, they shall also be glorified together. II. To RISE AGAIN. 1. It behoved Him to rise, that in rising He might show that the redemption-price paid by the shedding of His blood was sufficient, and that it was accepted. 2. It behoved Him to rise from the dead, that in rising He might show that He had triumphed over death. 3. It behoved Him to rise, that in rising He might be "the firstfruits of them that slept." 4. It behoved Him to rise from the dead, that in rising He might assert and exercise His regal character and office as King of saints, as Lord of the earth. (*R. Newton, D.D.*) *That repentance and remission of sins should be preached*.—*Christ's first and last subject*:—From Matt. iv. 17, coupled with this verse, we learn that repentance was the first subject upon which the Redeemer dwelt, and that it was the last which, with His departing breath, He commended to the earnestness of His disciples. He begins His mission crying, "Repent"; He ends it by saying to His successors the apostles, "Preach repentance and remission of sins among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." I. Repentance—ITS ORIGIN. When we cry, "Repent and be converted," there are some foolish men who call us legal. Now, we beg to state, at the opening of this first point, that repentance is of gospel parentage. It was not born near Mount Sinai. If repentance is ever obtained by the poor sinner, it must be found at the foot of the Cross, and not where the ten commandments lie shivered at Sinai's base. And as repentance is of gospel parentage, I make a second remark, it is also of gracious origin. Repentance was never yet produced in any man's heart apart from the grace of God. II. But to pass forward from this first point to our second head, let us notice the ESSENTIALS of true repentance. I have thus, as best I could, feeling many and very sad distractions in my own mind, endeavoured to explain the essentials of true repentance—illumination, humiliation, detestation, transformation. III. And now, with

all brevity, let me notice, in the third place, the COMPANIONS of true repentance. Her first companion is faith. There was a question once asked by the old Puritan divines, "Which was first in the soul, faith or repentance?" Some said that a man could not truly repent of sin until he believed in God, and had some sense of a Saviour's love. Others said a man could not have faith till he had repented of sin; for he must hate sin before he could trust Christ. So a good old minister who was present made the following remark: "Brethren," said he, "I don't think you can ever settle this question. It would be something like asking whether, when an infant is born, the circulation of the blood or the beating of the pulse can be first observed." Said he, "It seems to me that faith and repentance are simultaneous. They come at the same moment. There could be no true repentance without faith. There never was yet true faith without sincere repentance." We endorse that opinion. I believe they are like the Siamese twins—they are born together, and they could not live asunder, but must die if you attempt to separate them. Faith always walks side by side with his weeping sister, true repentance. There is another sweet thing which always goes with repentance, just as Aaron went with Moses, to be spokesman for him; for you must know that Moses was slow of speech, and so is repentance. Repentance has fine eyes, but stammering lips. In fact, it usually happens that repentance speaks through her eyes, and cannot speak with her lips at all, except her friend—who is a good spokesman—is near. He is called "Mr. Confession." This man is noted for his open-breastedness. Repentance sighs over the sin—confession tells it out. Holiness is evermore the bosom friend of penitence. Fair angel, clad in pure white linen, she loves good company, and will never stay in a heart where repentance is a stranger. Repentance must dig the foundations, but holiness shall erect the structure, and bring forth the top-stone. Repentance is the clearing away of the rubbish of the past temple of sin; holiness builds the new temple which the Lord our God shall inherit. Repentance and desires after holiness never can be separated. Yet once more—wherever repentance is, there cometh also with it peace. IV. And now I come to my fourth and last point, namely, the EXCELLENCIES of repentance. I shall somewhat surprise you, perhaps, if I say that one of the excellencies of repentance lies in its pleasantness. "Oh!" you say, "but it is bitter!" Nay, say I; it is sweet. At least, it is bitter when it is alone, like the waters of Marah; but there is a tree called the cross, which if thou canst put into it, it will be sweet, and thou wilt love to drink of it. At a school of mutes who were both deaf and dumb, the teacher put the following question to her pupils: "What is the sweetest emotion?" As soon as the children comprehended the question, they took their slates and wrote their answers. One girl in a moment wrote down "Joy." As soon as the teacher saw it, she expected that all would write the same, but another girl, more thoughtful, put her hand to her brow, and she wrote "Hope." Verily, the girl was not far from the mark. But the next one, when she brought up her slate, had written "Gratitude," and this child was not wrong. Another one, when she brought up her slate, had written "Love," and I am sure she was right. But there was one other who had written in large characters—and as she brought up her slate the tear was in her eye, showing she had written what she felt—"Repentance is the sweetest emotion." And I think *she* was right. Besides this excellency, it is specially sweet to God as well as to men. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." When St. Augustine lay a-dying, he had this verse always fixed upon the curtains, so that as often as he awoke he might read it—"A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." When you despise yourselves, God honours you; but as long as you honour yourselves, God despises you. (C. H. Spurgeon.)

The gospel commission.—I. THE FOUNDATION OF THIS COMMISSION (see ver. 46). II. THE PECULIAR WORK OF THIS COMMISSION. The preaching of repentance and remission of sins in the name of Christ. III. ITS BEGINNING AS TO LOCALITY. Jerusalem. IV. THE EXTENT OF THE COMMISSION. All nations. V. THE GRAND USE TO WHICH THE COMMISSION MUST NOW BE PUT BY THE PEOPLE OF GOD. (A. Somerville.)

The apostolic commission.—I. THE WORK PRESCRIBED BY THE SAVIOUR. The end of this work is, that sinners should be saved. This practical end we must ever keep in view. 1. The means here prescribed is preaching—preaching repentance and remission of sins. This ordinance of preaching, even in the general sense of public religious teaching, is all but peculiar to the religion of Christ. 2. The power indicated in our text is the power of truth, of the true Word of God. And here we see the ultimate source of our strength, in the revealed will of God. The

so-called crusaders, in their wild enterprise for the recovery of God-forsaken Palestine from the infidels, were animated and sustained by the battle-cry, "God wills it." In seeking to win the lost world to its life in God, from the bondage of sin and death and hell, we have to cheer us and sustain us the Bible truth, "God wills it." For the work which He has ordained shall certainly be done (Isa. lv. 10-13). This glorious work the gospel is fitted instrumentally to achieve by its nature as true and Divine, "the Word of God." 3. Not only the gospel is true and Divine; its Teacher is true and Divine. It is ordained in this Will that the preaching shall be "in the name" of Jesus the Christ. II. THE ORDER IN WHICH THIS WORK IS TO BE UNDERTAKEN: "BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM." Not passing by Jerusalem, nor coming to her in the last place, but "beginning at Jerusalem": so runs the Will. 1. They are the nearest, most easily reached. (1) In place. To the apostles elect Jerusalem was literally the nearest point of Judæa, and Judæa of Palestine, and Palestine of the world. And even beyond Judæa and Palestine, in every important city of the Gentile world, there was a Judæa and Jerusalem, a Jewish quarter and synagogue, more accessible and convenient for public religious teaching and discussion than any other quarter and temple. This is one of his points of resemblance to the Scot—his nation, far more than ours, is the ubiquitous nation. All the world over, the Jew is nearest in place. (2) They are nearest in mind. The wood has first to be hewn in the savage forest, and the stones to be quarried from the bowels of the earth, before the heathen mind can furnish as much as an altar for our faith to be laid on. But in the mind of the Jew the altar is built to our hands; the wood is there upon it, ready to be kindled to a blaze. 2. They are, when found and saved, fitted to be the most precious, as instruments of diffusing the gospel to others. I have already referred to their lot of ubiquity, showing that they are by position an army in actual occupation of the world. I might add that they have a natural gift of tongues, being familiar with the languages of all the nations among which they are dispersed. And we have seen that they have a theological knowledge, derived from Old Testament revelation, such that they need only to know Jesus as the incarnate Word in order to be ready-made preachers of Him in the gospel. 3. They are the worst. They are the chief of sinners, peculiarly the children of the devil (John viii. 44). No other nation has sinned as they have sinned, so long and deeply and desperately, against the light of God's offered mercy, first in "Moses and all the prophets," then in the person of Jesus the Christ, and finally in the apostles and evangelists throughout the new dispensation of the Spirit. Therefore we ought to preach the gospel of salvation "to the Jews first." For, first, in so doing we act in the spirit of the gospel as a dispensation of healing mercy: we illustrate the abounding grace of the great Physician, who hastens to go first with His remedy where the malady is deadliest. And second: when Jerusalem has yielded at last, and believed and repented for salvation, what shall her actual salvation be but spiritual resurrection to the world? For she will love much because she has been forgiven much. (*J. Macgregor, D.D.*)

The work of the Christian ministry:—I. THE GRAND SUBJECTS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY: repentance and remission of sins. II. HOW THESE SUBJECTS ARE TO BE DELIVERED: preached. (1) Simply; (2) earnestly; (3) faithfully; (4) affectionately. III. IN WHOM NAME THESE TWO GREAT SUBJECTS ARE TO BE PREACHED: in the name of Christ. IV. TO WHOM: all nations. V. WHERE FIRST: at Jerusalem. (*W. J. Grundy.*)

Repentance and pardon:—Repentance and pardon are like to the three spring months of the year—March, April, and May. Sin comes in like March—blustering, stormy, and full of bold violence. Repentance succeeds like April—showery, weeping, and full of tears. Pardon follows like May—springing, singing, full of joys and flowers. If our hands have been full of March, with the tempest of unrighteousness, our eyes must be full of April, with the sorrow of repentance; and then our hearts shall be full of May, in the true joy of forgiveness.

The duty and importance of special efforts for the conversion of cities:—I. OUR SAVIOUR DEVOTED HIS PERSONAL MINISTRY VERY MUCH TO CITIES AND LARGE TOWNS. II. CHRIST, IN HIS INSTRUCTIONS TO HIS DISCIPLES, PARTICULARLY DIRECTS THEIR ATTENTION TO CITIES AND LARGE TOWNS. III. CITIES WERE THE THEATRES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S FIRST AND MOST ILLUSTRIOUS ACHIEVEMENTS. Instance—Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, &c. IV. WE SHOULD SEEK THE CONVERSION OF CITIES, BECAUSE IN THEM THE ADVERSARY REIGNS WITH PECULIAR POWER. Would you see the power of Satan in cities? Cast your eye back upon the past. What were Sodom and Gomorrah? What were Tyre, and Sidon, and Nineveh? What was Babylon? What was Jerusalem in its latter days, when given up, accursed of God?

What were they but sinks of pollution and fountains of ruin? And, could we draw aside the curtains of darkness, what might we see in modern cities? V. THERE ARE PECULIAR ADVANTAGES FOR THE PROMOTION OF RELIGION IN CITIES. In cities, ministers and good men can readily and effectually co-operate in plans of usefulness. Cities also furnish peculiar advantages for individual exertion. If Christians in our cities would conduct themselves agreeably to the Bible, how awful to the wicked would be their example! What reformatations would be wrought among the worldly and profane! How many haunts of poverty and wretchedness would be searched out! How many souls, once in communion with the saints, would be brought back from their wanderings! VI. ANOTHER REASON FOR SPECIAL EFFORTS IN BEHALF OF CITIES IS, THE INFLUENCE WHICH THEY EXERT ON THE COUNTRY AND ON THE WORLD. (*W. Patton, M.A.*) *The charge to the apostles*:—I. WHAT THEY WERE TO PREACH. 1. Repentance. This consists in conviction of sin, contrition of heart, and godly sorrow for transgressions; and it ends in real conversion to God. 2. Remission of sins. Free, full, final. The Forgiver retains no anger. 3. They were to preach both repentance and the remission of sins. We are not to separate what God hath joined together. To encourage the hope of pardon, without repentance, is rebellion against common sense, and treason against the whole spirit and letter of the Word of God. And, on the other hand, there is no true repentance without proper views of, and faith in, God's pardoning mercy and grace. Without these the heart may be terrified, but it never can be softened. II. HOW THEY WERE TO PREACH THIS. "In His name." 1. In His stead. 2. By His authority. 3. Through His mediatorial influence. III. AMONG WHOM WERE THEY TO PREACH? "Among all nations." 1. Christianity was designed to be universal; to enter and to pervade all nations of the earth. 2. Christianity is adapted to universality. 3. Enough has already been done to encourage our hope of its actual universality in due time. IV. WHERE WERE THEY TO BEGIN THEIR WORK? "In Jerusalem." 1. To fulfil Scripture (*Zech. xiv. 8*). 2. To attest more strongly the truth of Christianity. They were to begin to preach the facts of the gospel in the very place where it is reported they occurred; and so recently as to be in the memory of those they addressed. Would impostors have done this? 3. To afford proofs of the Saviour's compassion. He sends His ambassadors with offers of mercy and pardon to a city whose inhabitants were reeking with His blood. 4. It was that His ministers should afford encouragement to all; so that none should have a just pretence "to perish in despair." "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." 5. It was to encourage His servants in their endeavours to evangelize. The apostles were not to begin at a distance, but as near as possible. Suppose, now, you had a wilderness covered with briars and thorns, and you wished to make a smooth passage through it; would it be wiser to begin at the farther end, and work homewards, or at home first, pursuing your course to the farther end? Would not the latter way save you some time and trouble? And, as you went on, would not the little parts you cultivated afford supplies to aid you to proceed with your cultivation? (*W. Jay.*) *Repentance*:—He that repents leaves the wrong way to take the right. Repentance is a change of mind leading to a change of conduct. He that repents turns quite round to God; his back was to heaven's gate, his face is now toward it. A single action may show the change, as the weather-vane, pointing to a new quarter, tells us that the wind has changed. And what a change that may be! "The wind is west," we cry; "the drought is over!" How simple is repentance, how mighty the effects! "Effects!" "Simple!" Is the rain that blesses the thirsty land caused by the turning weather-cock? Is the great change of wind, of which even smoke or a straw may give us notice, only to be had for the wishing, or so very simple in its causes? We cannot state too simply to ourselves what repentance is; but this repentance, of which we so speak, is a very great thing. This change in the soul's weather may come in with stormy darkness; thunder and rain and tempest may be the servants of God that bring the blessing. To preach repentance then is not merely to cry: "Consider your ways, amend them." It is to present such inducements, and to provide such "assistances" that the soul may feel itself very powerfully dealt with for amendment; and these are provided and presented in Jesus Christ. (*T. T. Lynch.*) *Remission of sins*:—"Remission of sins" is the assurance that God will not charge them against the repenting soul; and that He will break the strength they still have in it, and wholly disperse and destroy them. Pardon and complete deliverance are assured; and at once the effect of former sin begins to be put away. But the process of salvation is a gradual one. To put on

Christ is not the work of an hour. The Physician once welcomed, many a visit must He pay. Even were the soul at the hour of its repentance absolutely assured that no more harm could ever come to it from what it had done amiss, it has all its good yet to win and to appropriate: as yet it occupies a low place; it is untaught, unclad; it must be educated; it can rise only by degrees. Christ has said for it, and for all souls, "I have overcome evil; I have perfected good." By faith in Him, *i.e.*, by our so personal union with Him, through trust, that He is ours and we His, we gain all the benefits of His protection from evil, and His promised impartation of God. But we enter into the fulness of the blessing gradually. And, strong as our confidence in the Divine pardon may be, sin in us does not at once die; and earnest as our repentance toward God may be, the good new life in us is not at once adult and all-accomplished. But, in the name of Christ, there has been preached to us, and still is, "repentance and remission of sins": "repentance," with all inducements and all assistances; "remission," with all assurance: the comfort of the blessing, the earnest of its full realization—these may at once be ours. In the name of Christ: shall we say, by His power the one is preached; for His sake, the other? Yes; so we may say. But the two blessings are one in Him who has subdued the past for us and won for us the future. Vain, and wrong, were any declaration of pardon without a call to repentance. Vain, and even mocking, were any call to repentance without the promise of pardon. Hope there can be none for man unless he be made divinely good. Good, and happy in his goodness can no man be made, unless the forces of evil with which he was leagued, by which he was thrall'd, to which he contributed, are overcome. (*Ibid.*) *Beginning at Jerusalem.*—*Reasons for "beginning at Jerusalem"*:—I. THAT THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER MIGHT BE FULFILLED. II. THAT THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY MIGHT BE CONFIRMED. III. THAT THE FULNESS OF CHRIST'S MERCY MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED. IV. THAT THE EFFICACY OF HIS GRACE MIGHT BE MANIFESTED. In conclusion, we learn from the subject—1. That it is the duty of professing Christians to manifest the spirit of Christ. If Christ is dwelling in you, you cannot but manifest His spirit, for His life is your life. 2. We learn from this subject, that it is our duty to spread the gospel of Christ. 3. From this subject we learn how sincere and earnest is God's desire for the salvation of sinners—"He is not willing that any should perish." (*J. Dobie, D.D.*) *Beginning at Jerusalem*;—I. WHAT THEY WERE TO PREACH. 1. Repentance. (1) Repentance as a duty. (2) The acceptableness of repentance. (3) The motives of repentance. Not mere fear of hell; but sorrow for sin. (4) Repentance in its perpetuity. (5) The source of repentance. The Lord Jesus Christ is exalted to give repentance. 2. Remission of sins. Free, full, irreversible pardon for all who repent of sin, and lay hold on Christ by faith. II. WHERE IT IS TO BE PREACHED. Among all nations. Divine warrant for missions. III. But this is not all. We are actually told how to PREACH IT. Repentance and remission are to be preached in Christ's name. What does this mean? 1. Ought we not to learn from this that we are to tell the gospel to others, because Christ orders us to do so? In Christ's name we must do it. Silence is sin when salvation is the theme. But it means more than that. 2. Not only preach it under His orders, but preach it on His authority. The true servant of Christ has his Master to back him up. 3. But does it not mean, also, that the repentance and the remission which are so bound together come to men by virtue of His name? Oh, sinner, there would be no acceptance of your repentance if it were not for that dear name! IV. Now, I shall ask your attention to the principal topic of the present discourse, and that is, that He told His disciples WHERE to BEGIN. The apostles were not to pick and choose where they should start, but they were to begin at Jerusalem. Why? 1. Because it was written in the Scriptures that they were to begin at Jerusalem (*Isa. ii. 3; Joel ii. 32, iii. 16; Zech. xiv. 8*). 2. I suppose that our Lord bade His disciples begin to preach the gospel at Jerusalem, because it was at Jerusalem that the facts which make up the gospel had occurred. 3. The third reason why the Lord Jesus told them to begin at Jerusalem may have been that He knew that there would come a time when some of His disciples would despise the Jews, and therefore He said—When you preach My gospel, begin with them. This is a standing commandment, and everywhere we ought to preach the gospel to the Jew as well as to the Gentile; Paul even says, "to the Jew first." 4. The fourth reason for beginning at Jerusalem is a practical lesson for you. Begin where you are tempted not to begin. Naturally these disciples would have said one to another when they met, "We cannot do much here in Jerusalem. The first night that we met together the doors were shut for fear of the Jews. It is of no use for us to go out into the

street; these people are all in such an excited frame of mind that they will not receive us; we had better go up to Damascus, or take a long journey, and then commence preaching; and when this excitement is cooled down, and they have forgotten about the crucifixion, we will come and introduce Christ gradually, and say as little as we can about putting Him to death." That would have been the rule of policy—that rule which often governs men who ought to be led by faith. But our Lord had said, "Beginning at Jerusalem," and so Peter must stand up in the midst of that motley throng, and he must tell them, "This Jesus whom ye have with wicked hands crucified and slain is now risen from the dead." Instead of tearing Peter to pieces they come crowding up, crying, "We believe in Jesus: let us be baptized into His sacred name." The same day there were added to the church three thousand souls, and a day or two afterwards five thousand were converted by the same kind of preaching. We ought always to try to do good where we think that it will not succeed. 5. Begin at home. Look well to your own children, servants, brothers, sisters, neighbours. 6. Begin where much has been already done. The Jerusalem people had been taught for centuries in vain; and yet Christ's disciples were to speak to them first. We must not pass the gospel-hardened; we must labour for the conversion of those who have enjoyed privileges but have neglected them. 7. Begin where the gospel day is short. It was about to end at Jerusalem. Now, then, if you have any choice as to the person you shall speak to, select an old man. He is near his journey's end, and if he is unsaved there is but a little bit of candle left by the light of which he may come to Christ. Or when any of you notice a girl upon whose cheek you see that hectic flush which marks consumption—if you notice during service the deep "churchyard" cough—say to yourself, "I will not let you go without speaking to you, for you may soon be dead." We ought speedily to look up those whose day of grace is short. 8. Begin, dear friend, where you may expect opposition. That is a singular thing to advise, but I recommend it because the Saviour advised it. If they began at Jerusalem, they would arouse a ferocious opposition. But nothing is much better for the gospel than opposition. 9. The Saviour bade them begin at Jerusalem, because the biggest sinners lived there. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *Beginning at Jerusalem.*—I. The charge to begin at Jerusalem shows how the gospel challenges investigation of the facts which it proclaims in the locality in which they transpired, and where, in consequence, they are capable of being most thoroughly sifted. II. The charge to begin at Jerusalem shows that even Jerusalem sinners—the men who had thirsted for the Saviour's blood—the men who had cried, "Away with Him, crucify Him!"—the men who mocked Him in His last agonies—the men who reviled and tortured and murdered Him—were not excluded from His compassion. 1. Taking at the outset the lowest ground, we learn from His words that there is mercy for the greatest sinners. 2. But this is not all. The text requires us to advance a step further. It not only teaches that there is mercy for the worst sinners, but that the worst and most wretched sinners are especially the objects of mercy. Should you begin to ask how this is, and on what principle it is to be accounted for, our own feelings under certain circumstances may help us to an answer. The mother, if she loves as a mother should, has no arbitrary or groundless preference for any of her children. While they are all about her, behaving as children should, she cannot tell you which is dearest. Most sincerely she will tell you that she loves them all alike. But in after years, when their character is developed, and each pursues his own course, it is the poor prodigal whose suffering most awakens her solicitude, and not so much his suffering as his sin. It is *his* image that is most frequently present to her mind. Let me add here, that the salvation of the worst sinners will serve most to magnify the Divine mercy. As the rough sea makes manifest the good qualities of the lifeboat which has weathered the storm; as the physician's skill is most illustriously displayed, and the efficacy of his medicines most strikingly evinced, by the cure of the most aggravated disease; as the builder's reputation is advanced, not only by the beauty and symmetry of the structure which he has erected, but also by the worthlessness of the materials out of which it has been formed; so is mercy most illustriously displayed and most gloriously magnified in the salvation of the greatest sinners. Moreover, the forgiveness of the greater guilt is fitted to awaken greater gratitude in the forgiven sinner. III. The Saviour's charge shows the order in which we should proceed in our efforts for the conversion of the world. The principle which He commends to us is the sound principle of beginning at home. But while our efforts should begin at home, they should only begin there. (*W. Landels.*) *The Divine order of*

preaching :—Mark the order to be observed, for it is here prescribed, in promulgating the system of truth and mercy throughout the world. They were to “begin at Jerusalem”; and therefore we must begin there. For thus it is written—“A law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” This part of the Divine order gives to our common Christianity a character of the most resplendent truth. “Beginning at Jerusalem.” Suppose they had begun anywhere else but at Jerusalem. Suppose they had passed Jerusalem by. Suppose they had gone to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. Suppose they had gone to countries still more remote, and there commenced operations, and there proclaimed repentance and remission of sins in the name of Jesus Christ. Infidelity with both its eyes open and both its ears, to look at anything that can be seen, and listen to anything that can be heard, which can be lifted up to the discredit of Christianity—infidelity would very soon have raised its crest, and lifted its voice on high. It would have said, “You see how these apostles, as they are called, managed this matter. Not a man of them dared say a word in Jerusalem. They knew, if they had gone there with their tales about the darkened sun, the rending rocks and rising dead, the people of Jerusalem would have risen up to confront them; a child of seven years old would have been enough to confront them all. Away they went to another part of the world, and there began with their tales of one Jesus that lived and died and rose again, and that all who believe in Him will be saved by Him; and these untutored people, who had no means of ascertaining whether the statements were true or false, seeing the confidence with which they were asserted, were credulous enough to receive them, and thus your Christianity made a beginning in the world.” Did it so? Let infidelity blush, if of a blush it is capable—which I very much doubt—for where shame is, virtue may be some day or other. Let infidelity blush!—at Jerusalem they did begin. On the very spot where the facts happened, there were those facts fearlessly and triumphantly proclaimed. They did not wait half a century, till almost all that lived when the facts occurred were numbered with the dead. They went immediately; they “began” there on the very spot; there they preached a risen Saviour, and repentance and remission of sins in His name. Truth loves daylight, truth glories in the sunshine—invites attention, challenges examination, commands conviction and assent. “Begin at Jerusalem!” and does not this give to our Divine Christianity a character of the tenderest compassion? “Begin at Jerusalem?” I can almost imagine I hear Simon Peter, who had a warm heart and therefore a ready tongue, say to his Master—“Oh! let it be rather anywhere but Jerusalem. Hast Thou forgotten how they treated Thy prophets before Thee? Hast Thou so soon forgotten how they treated Thyself?—how they despised Thy teaching and Thy prayers, and Thy entreaties and tears? Hast Thou so soon forgotten how they thirsted for Thy blood, and how they rested not till they had imbrued their hands in it? Look at Thy hands and side, do not they bear the marks of their cruelty?—Anywhere but Jerusalem.” Such might be the language of man, but such was not the determination of our merciful Redeemer—“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” “Begin at Jerusalem.” “Though I bear the marks of their cruelty, they shall have the first offer of My clemency. Begin there. Go and try to find out those that falsely accused Me, and tell them I am ready to become their advocate, to plead their cause before the throne on high. ‘Begin at Jerusalem’—try to find out those that scourged Me, and tell them from Me, that by My stripes they may be healed. ‘Begin at Jerusalem’—find out those cruel wretches that mingled for Me in My extremity the cup of vinegar and gall, and tell them from Me, that at My hand they may receive the cup of salvation. ‘Begin at Jerusalem’—find out those that plaited the crown of thorns—that put it on—that smote Me with a reed, and mocked Me—and tell them from Me, that from Me they may receive ‘a crown of glory that fadeth not away.’” (R. Newton, D.D.)

The Church's duty to those outside :—Suppose you gentlemen who are in business received no business letters to-morrow morning when you reached your office, and you were expecting large remittances from abroad, you would be very much astonished. You would wait for the next post, and for the next, but I expect that, before noon, your excitement would be so great that you would hurry off, probably, to the General Post Office, and, if there was a universal non-delivery of letters in the city of London, you would really wish to see the Postmaster-General if he were within reach, or, at any rate, the postmaster of the main office. And what would be your criticism if, when you explained your troubles and the non-delivery of the letters, that official shrugged his shoulders, and calmly replied that the letters were

all there, and that you were quite aware that the post-office was open from seven to ten, and that you had only to call and you could have your letters. You would turn round and say, "The Government pays you to deliver the letters at our address." And in the same way God has given you and me certain messages of mercy to the sinners in this neighbourhood, and it is our business to take those messages to them. (*H. P. Hughes, M.A.*) **Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem.—Tarrying for fitness:—**I. THE FITNESS OF THE CHRISTIAN. 1. Its essential feature. "Power." This comprehends all the "fruits of the Spirit." 2. It is properly and distinctly a gift imparted from without and above. "Endued with power from on high." 3. Its purpose. Not an ornament or accomplishment merely. It qualified men for various offices in the Church (Eph. iv. 7, 11). II. TARRYING FOR FITNESS. Great benefits require time for their realization: and spiritual exercise prepares for spiritual endowment. 1. By their enforced tarrying the disciples were taught that no man must thrust himself into the ministry of Christ. 2. The delay was an important element of their preparation. 3. The place for power is the place of Divine appointment. Why "Jerusalem"? It was full of associations of His ignominy and death. It contained the worst enemies of His cause. But "Christ is God's forgiveness." (*A. F. Muir, M.A.*) *Times of waiting:—*The time during which they were to "tarry" proved to be ten days—from the Thursday to the Sunday week following. It was just long enough to be a real test and trial. You may say, perhaps, considering the circumstances, it was a tremendous trial. And yet, mercifully, just shortened enough to be not intolerable—a discipline, but like every other from the Father's hand, a discipline beautifully tempered. I am inclined to think that this interruption—I speak, of course, according to man—this interruption by ten days had a great design, and that it was to illustrate one very important part of God's methods with all His children, at all times and under all circumstances. I see traces of the same method of dealing throughout the Bible. There is a pause, there is a breathing time, before anything falls. In judgments, the flood did not begin till not only a hundred and twenty years had passed, but not until seven days after the date for which it had been positively announced. And at Sodom, at Gomorrah, at Jericho, at Nineveh, at Jerusalem, there were intervals, distinct, between sentence and execution. While equally, many, I might say most, of the best blessings of which we read did not come till there had first been what you may call their period—a waiting-time. Sometimes it is very short, as in the case of the Syrophenician woman, or Mary and Martha at Bethany, three or four days; sometimes longer, as with Abraham looking for a son, or David's succession to his predicted throne; sometimes exceedingly protracted, as when good king Hezekiah never lived to see the answer to a father's prayers in the conversion of his son, and yet, nevertheless, when the appointed moment came, his son was brought to God, though the lips that prayed it were silent. And what, what is the whole of this dispensation through which we are now passing? A space between two advents—a waiting time for that which seemed to be, and which apostles thought to be, quite close at the door two thousand years ago. Do you say that is too long to be a parallel, that is not an interval? Nay, "a little while and ye shall not see Me; and again a little while and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father." And we are dealing with One to whom "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." The thought, then, which I wish to impress upon you, and which seems to me to be the lesson of this season is, that God is a God who delights in intervals—intervals as they relate to our little minds, but all an equal part in one grand design—and that the right viewing and the proper use of these intervals is an essential part of the Christian's education. We ought to know how these intervals should be passed. First, you must have in your mind a remembrance that it is an interval, only an interval, an ordained interval, an interval with a defined boundary line—though you cannot see it—that it is in the map, that it is as much a part of the map of God's covenant as the issue which is to come, or as the means which you are now using to obtain it. Then, acknowledging it as God's own waiting time, you must honour Him. Shall the great God, all wise and true, be hurried by one of His creatures? "Tarry thou the Lord's leisure" is written on the forefront of all God's government. Is not it enough for you that He has told you "what"?—are you to dictate the "when," and determine the "where"? Still, while you keep the eye of expectation upon the horizon where the promise is to arise, keep your hand on the door. The hour is a fixed hour—it is in the "determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God." Then, in the interval, you will do

well to do just what Christ told His little Church to do in this great model of all waiting—go on with present duties, be content for a little time to have a very small sphere, keep in the appointed path, and be sure that you use ordinances, be where all blessing comes, stay in Jerusalem. Then, in your Jerusalem, look to it that it is all love, else your prayers will be hindered. And, like the twelve—and this is a wonderful record, and shows how God blesses and honours His waiting ones, even when all outward circumstances are quite dark—spend the time in great joy. And be much in prayer, especially united prayer. (*J. Vaughan, M.A.*) **Endued with power from on high.—Spiritual power:**—Our need to-day is the same as that of the apostles. Our work is prosecuted under different circumstances, but its difficulties are essentially the same. The weak things of the world have still to contend against the mighty, and can be equal to the struggle only in so far as they are made mighty by power from on high. And the promise to us is unchanged. **I. WHAT THIS SPIRITUAL POWER IS.** In a word, it is intensity in every part of the Christian life. There is power in faith—the strong, simple, unwavering faith which so lays hold of a truth that it possesses and controls the soul, stirring its deepest sympathies, and awakening its mightiest faculties. There is power in the devoted loyalty to truth which leads a man to obey her call at whatever cost, to surrender wealth, ease, honour, and, what is as hard as all besides, personal prejudice, as well as interest for her sake. There is power in the courage which leads a man to work out his own ideal of duty; to speak what is true, and do what is right, without taking counsel with flesh and blood; to stand alone and defy a scoffing world, rather than compromise his integrity or betray his trust. There is power in sympathy—the gentle, loving, active compassion, which finds its chief delight in doing good; which unlocks the hearts of men as by a magic key, and establishes a rule within them by the force of its own unselfishness. There is power in the grandeur and sublimity imparted to life by its conscious association with another and eternal state of being, and the desire so to shape all its thoughts and words and deeds that it shall be but the fitting prelude to that better and purer life. There is power in devoted love to a high and noble Person: a love which not only inspires in the soul the earnest desire to partake of His goodness and beauty, but to forget itself in the daily effort to exalt and honour Him. All these elements are united in that “spiritual power” of which I speak. **II. THE NEED WHICH THE CHURCH HAS OF THIS POWER.** It is the one great want of this age. With it, we need not be afraid of the utmost liberty; without it, there is no safety, even in the most watchful and zealous conservatism. With it, we shall be able to silence the gainsaying even of this sceptical generation; without it, we may employ the most cogent arguments, and put them in the most convincing form, and our labour will be utterly fruitless; for it is the hearts of men we have to move rather than their intellects, and hearts are only reached by the power of soul. With it, we may still have controversy, but there will be a counteractive force that will repress all its evil and violence; without it, we may have uniformity and quiet, but in them there will be the seeds of corruption, decay, and death. With it, we may have a feeble agency and imperfect organization and defective plans, and yet out of their very weakness will be perfected strength; without it, we may have improvement in our machinery, but for lack of the motive power there will be no result. Give this, and everything will follow. The whole aspect of our religious condition will be altered, a new and more vigorous love will characterize the action of the Church, problems that seem insoluble will be settled, and difficulties that have been regarded as insuperable will be overcome. **III. HOW THIS POWER IS TO BE OBTAINED.** It is “power from on high.” God gives it—gives it to every humble and trusting soul, gives it in answer to prayer, gives it liberally to all who earnestly seek. The first and great condition of it is absolute trust in Him. Nothing else can impart earnestness and sincerity to our supplications. (*J. G. Rogers, B.A.*) **Power from on high:**—I propose to illustrate this description of the blessed Spirit—I. BY THE EXTRAORDINARY EFFECTS PRODUCED UPON THE APOSTLES. II. BY THE ORDINARY INFLUENCE EXERTED ON THEM AND ON ALL TRUE CHRISTIANS. **I. Consider, then, in these extraordinary gifts, which were only intended for the time, how mightily God wrought in man.** 1. Take the gift of tongues. 2. Mark the illumination of the mind with the full truth. 3. Mark the power with which they spake. All was light, all feeling. 4. Mark their miracles of healing. 5. Note their discernment of spirits, as in the cases of Ananias and Simon Magus. 6. Finally, take their courage. **II. BY THE ORDINARY INFLUENCES EXERTED ON THE APOSTLES AND ON ALL TRUE CHRISTIANS.** Let us, then, consider how this power manifests itself. And here, too, we shall see

a mighty working of God in man, not inferior in real glory, and superior in grace, to those extraordinary illapses. This is displayed—1. In the awakening of the soul of man from its deep and deadly sleep of sin. 2. Our subject is illustrated by the office of the Spirit as the Comforter. 3. We have another instance in the office of the Spirit as the Holy Ghost the Sanctifier. 4. Take a final instance from the fruits of the Spirit. I apply this subject to your edification by observing—1. That there is a power promised to you more glorious than all the endowments of apostolic gifts. 2. Fix the greatness of the blessing before you. 3. Do you ask how you are to attain it? See your example in the apostles. Believe your Lord: "I send the promise of My Father upon you." 4. Know that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Aspire, then, to this. 5. Ask the effusion of the Spirit upon your friends, the whole Church, and the world. (*R. Watson.*)

Power:—The chief aim and labour of Boulton was the practical introduction of Watt's steam engine as the great working power of England. With pride he said to Boswell, when visiting Soho, "I sell here, sir, what all the world desires to have—power." (*Smiles.*)

Power from on high:—Some men are richly endowed with this priceless gift. When they speak their hearers feel that a supernatural power is grappling with them, and forcing them to yield or to set up a conscious resistance. People are often at a loss to account for the influence which such men possess. As men they see nothing in them to account for it; but they are compelled to feel and confess that mysterious something with which their entire being is surcharged. Mr. Carpenter, of New Jersey, a Presbyterian layman, who lived many years ago, presents a most striking instance of this wonderful power. His education was very limited, and his mental endowments were of the most ordinary kind. Till anointed of the Holy Ghost he was a mere cipher in the Church. As soon, however, as he received that anointing, he became a man of marvellous spiritual power. The hardest sinners melted under his appeals, and yielded to Christ. At his death it was stated that by a very careful inquiry it had been ascertained that more than ten thousand souls had been converted through his direct instrumentality. Finney is another instance. "Soon after his conversion," we are told, "he received a wonderful baptism of the Spirit, which was followed by marvellous effects. His words uttered in private conversation, and forgotten by himself, fell like live coals on the hearts of men, and awakened a sense of guilt, which would not let them rest till the blood of sprinkling was applied. At his presence, before he opened his lips, the operatives in a mill began to fall on their knees, and cry for mercy. When traversing Western and Central New York, he came to the village of Rome in a time of spiritual slumber. He had not been in the house of the pastor an hour before he had conversed with all the family, and brought them all to their knees seeking pardon or the fulness of the Spirit. In a few days every man, woman, and child in the village and vicinity was converted, and the work ceased from lack of material to transform; and the evangelist passed on to other fields to behold new triumphs of the gospel through his instrumentality." (*John Griffith.*)

New power:—When I was preaching in Farwell Hall, in Chicago, I never worked harder to prepare my sermons than I did then. I preached and preached; but it was beating against the air. A good woman used to say, "Mr. Moody, you don't seem to have power in your preaching." Oh, my desire was that I might have a fresh anointing. I requested this woman and a few others to come and pray with me every Friday at four o'clock. Oh, how piteously I prayed that God might fill the empty vessel. After the fire in Chicago, I was in New York city, and going into the bank on Wall Street, it seemed as if I felt a strange and mighty power coming over me. I went up to the hotel, and there in my room I wept before God, and cried, "Oh, my God, stay Thy hand!" He gave me such fulness that it seemed more than I could contain. May God forgive me if I should speak in a boastful way, but I do not know that I have preached a sermon since, but God has given me some soul. Oh, I would not be back where I was four years ago for all the wealth of this world. If you would roll it at my feet, I would kick it away like a football. I seem a wonder to some of you, but I am a greater wonder to myself than to any one else. These are the very same sermons I preached in Chicago, word for word. It is not new sermons, but the power of God. It is not a new gospel, but the old gospel, with the Holy Ghost of power. (*D. L. Moody.*)

Need of the Spirit of God—the fire from heaven:—Suppose we saw an army sitting down before a granite fort, and they told us that they intended to batter it down, we might ask them, "How!" They point to a cannon ball. Well, but there is no power in that; it is heavy, but not more than half-a-hundred or perhaps a

hundred-weight; if all the men in the army hurled it against the fort they would make no impression. They say, "No, but look at the cannon!" Well, but there is no power in that. A child may ride upon it; a bird may perch in its mouth. It is a machine, and nothing more. "But look at the powder." Well, there is no power in that; a child may spill it; a sparrow may peck it. Yet this powerless powder and powerless ball are put into the powerless cannon: one spark of fire enters it, and then, in the twinkling of an eye, that powder is a flash of lightning, and that cannon ball is a thunderbolt which smites as if it had been sent from heaven. So is it with our church or school machinery of this day; we have the instruments necessary for pulling down strongholds, but O for the fire from heaven! (*W. Arthur.*)

Vers. 50-58. While He blessed them He was parted from them.—*The ascension*.—I. CONSIDER THE ASCENSION AS THE CROWNING FACT OF CHRIST'S LIFE. It was the consummation of all His glorious work for man, and henceforth man through Him becomes a conqueror too. "He led captivity captive, He received gifts for men." And with the baptism of these we are conquerors, in our temptations over the devil, in our gardens of agony over sorrow, and in the end over death and the grave, when we shall ascend to be with Him in glory. II. CONSIDER HIS ASCENSION AS HIS ENTHRONEMENT AS KING OVER ALL. Unseen but ever present. Ruling from His throne in heaven over all the affairs of the world till His enemies become His footstool. III. CONSIDER HIS ASCENSION IN RELATION TO HIS COMING AGAIN (*Acts i. 11*). (*R. Davey.*) *Our Lord's ascension*.—I. NOTICE THE PLACE FROM WHICH OUR LORD ASCENDED. Near Gethsemane. Near Bethany. A familiar haunt. II. NOTICE THE WITNESSES OF OUR LORD'S ASCENSION. His faithful apostles. III. NOTICE THE LAST ACT OF OUR LORD BEFORE HIS ASCENSION. Blessing. IV. THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST HELPS OUR THOUGHTS, AND GIVES DEFINITENESS TO OUR CONCEPTIONS OF THE FUTURE LIFE OF THE REDEEMED. V. CHRIST'S ASCENSION IS THE PLEDGE OF THE HEAVENLY LIFE OF THE REDEEMED. VI. WHEN OUR LORD ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN HE GAINED FOR US A GREAT AND UNSPEAKABLE BLESSING, THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. (*W. Bull, B.A.*) *The ascension*.—In this quiet and unostentatious manner did our Saviour take His departure from this world. His exit was as noiseless—as little attended with pomp—as His entrance. He has finished the redemption of a world—He has vanquished the powers of hell—He has triumphed over death and the grave. 1. From His ascension, therefore, we may learn that heaven has been opened for us. He became our brother. He stood as our representative. There is not only comfort for us in the assurance of admission, but in the thought, that when admitted we shall find One so closely related to us occupying such an exalted place. 2. Our Saviour's ascension in the nature He wore while on earth may teach us that, though He be so highly exalted, He has sympathy with us still; though far removed from us as regards His bodily presence, the brotherly tie which united us has not been severed. 3. The presence in heaven—the exaltation to the throne of universal dominion of One so closely related to us, and having such sympathy with us, should give confidence to our prayers, leading us to desire and expect great blessings at His hands. 4. Finally. Let us be thankful for the privilege we enjoy in the exaltation of One who bears our nature. (*W. Landels.*) *On the ascension of Christ*.—First, let us consider the TIME of the occurrence of this event. This interval, also, was sufficient in order to afford Him an opportunity of detailing much that to them would be highly interesting, in relation to His kingdom, to the preaching of His gospel, and to the establishment of His empire through the world. Once more, He continued a sufficient period of time on earth in order to afford the strongest evidence of the love He bore to His Church and people; that He would not even take possession of the promised crown, nor enter upon "the joy set before Him," till He had ordered all things relating to His kingdom. We notice, in the second place, the SITE OR SPOT at which this occurrence took place. "He led them out as far as to Bethany." I pass on, in the third place, to consider the MANNER in which the ascent of our Lord Jesus Christ took place. You will observe, first, that it was while He prayed—"as He blessed them." Observe, again, that it was while they were listening to the interesting communications which our Lord had to impart. It belongs to this part of the subject to observe their solemn adoration of Him after that they saw Him no more. "He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven: and they worshipped Him." I hasten to the last point of our discourse—to consider THE GREAT ENDS AND OBJECTS OF THIS MOST IMPORTANT TRANS-

ACTION. Christ has left our world—He is gone—He has gone to the mansions of heavenly glory; and for what purposes has He taken His departure. First, in order that He might celebrate a signal triumph over all His enemies. He has gone, secondly, to take possession of the well-earned reward, the stipulated recompense, to which His obedience and His suffering have so well entitled Him. Thirdly, He has gone to receive and to communicate that fulness which the Father had entrusted into His hands; and especially the gift of the Holy Ghost, which He bestows upon "the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." Fourthly, He has gone to ensure and prepare a place for all His believing followers. I only add that He has gone thus to heaven in order to give an example and specimen of the manner in which He will come again in the clouds of Heaven. And is He gone? and have the heavens received Him? Then, first, let us send our hearts after Him. Secondly, in the absence of our Lord, let us abide closely in the fellowship of His Church. Like the disciples, let us resort to the temple; like the disciples, let us keep together. Let us not be scattered and disunited. Thirdly, this subject should lead us to cherish a cheerful confidence with respect to our entrance into eternity. And let this soothe our spirits when we are mourning over our dead. (*G. Clayton, M.A.*) *The Lord's farewell.*—I. THE LAST ACTS OF THE REDEEMER ON EARTH. 1. He selects a suitable place from which to take His departure. 2. He solemnly blesses His disciples. 3. He ascends up to heaven. 4. "It came to pass, while He blessed them, He was taken up." Did His ascension, then, interrupt and cut short the blessing? No; He still continued to bless as He went up. No—nor is the blessing yet at an end: for this is that Christ who, as St. Paul says, "is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." II. THE FIRST ACTS OF THE REDEEMED AFTER HIS DEPARTURE. 1. They worshipped Him. Remember that! The appointed teachers of the Christian religion "worshipped" Christ; it was their very first act after they had ceased to behold Him. 2. They were filled with joy—great joy. Now therefore they rejoiced—1. On their Lord's account. "If ye love Me," He had said, "ye would rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father." And this their joy is now fulfilled. 2. On their own account. All was now plain in the system of that redemption, concerning which they had long formed such erroneous expectations. 3. In the use of appointed means they sought and expected His gifts of grace. In Jerusalem were they to receive the "promise of the Father"; therefore they at once returned thither. On their arrival, behold them "continually in the temple, praising and blessing God!" continually—that is, at every appointed service. (*J. Jowett, M.A.*) *Our Lord's attitude in ascending.*—I. HIS HANDS WERE UPLIFTED TO BLESS. 1. This blessing was no unusual thing. To stretch out His hands in benediction was His customary attitude. In that attitude He departed, with a benediction still proceeding from His lips. 2. This blessing was with authority. He blessed them while His Father acknowledged Him by receiving Him to heaven. 3. This blessing was so full that, as it were, He emptied His hands. They saw those dear hands thus unladen of their benedictions. 4. The blessing was for those beneath Him, and beyond the sound of His voice; He scattered benedictions upon them all. 5. The blessing was the fit *finis* of His sojourn here; nothing fitter, nothing better, could have been thought of. II. THOSE HANDS WERE PIERCED. This could be seen by them all as they gazed upward. 1. Thus they knew that they were Christ's hands. 2. Thus they saw the price of the blessing. His crucifixion has purchased continual blessing for all His redeemed. 3. Thus they saw the way of the blessing; it comes from those human hands, through those sacrificial wounds. 4. A sight of those hands is in itself a blessing. By that sight we see pardon and eternal life. 5. The entire action is an epitome of the gospel. This is the substance of the matter—"hands pierced distribute benedictions." Jesus, through suffering and death, has power to bless us out of the highest heaven. This is the last that was seen of our Lord. He has not changed His attitude of benediction. He will not change it till He shall descend in His glory. III. THOSE HANDS SWAY THE SCEPTRE. His hands are omnipotent. Those very hands, which blessed His disciples, now hold, on their behalf, the sceptre—1. Of providence: both in small affairs and greater matters. 2. Of the spiritual kingdom: the Church and all its work. 3. Of the future judgment and the eternal reign. (*C. H. Spurgeon.*) *The Saviour's hand.*—That wonderful hand of Christ! It was the same hand which had been so quickly stretched out to rescue Peter when sinking in Galilee's waves. It was that same hand which had been held in the sight of the questioning disciples on the third evening after they had seen it laid

lifeless in the tomb. It was that same hand which incredulous Thomas must see before he would believe its risen power; it was that same hand which was extended to him not only to see, but to touch the nail-prints in its palm. It was that same hand which the disciples last saw uplifted in a parting blessing when the cloud parted Him from them. It was only after ten days that they realized the fulness of blessing which came from that extended, pierced hand of Christ. Peter at Pentecost must have preached with that last sight of it fresh in his memory, when he said, "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." That hand, with its nail-prints, knocks at the heart's door for entrance. That hand, with its deep marks of love, beckons on the weary runner in the heavenly way. (*F. B. Pullan.*)

Lessons from the ascension:—The ascension was the appropriate bloom and culmination of the resurrection. I. SINCE OUR LORD HAS ASCENDED, WE ARE NEVER TO THINK OF HIM AS DEAD. He has rounded the black and insurmountable Cape of Storms, and changed it for us henceforth into the Cape of Good Hope. It follows that all the great offices pertaining to His exaltation are in active exercise. 1. He stands in heaven to-day the Living Head of His redeemed Church. 2. He stands in heaven to-day our Priestly Advocate. 3. He stands in heaven to-day as the Controller of all things in God's providential government. II. SINCE OUR LORD HAS ASCENDED, WE ARE NEVER TO THINK OF HIM AS DISTANT. Contact of spirit with spirit—nothing can be nearer, more intimate. Christ's inner presence by the Holy Ghost is the special boon and issue of His ascension. III. SINCE OUR LORD HAS ASCENDED, WE ARE NEVER TO THINK OF HIM AS DIFFERENT. He has not laid aside His brotherhood with us. To our Brother's heart prayer must find its way; from Him to us a perfect sympathy must ever flow. (*W. Hoyt, D.D.*)

On the ascension of Christ:—I. In the first place, BY OUR SAVIOUR'S ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN IT WAS MADE TO APPEAR THAT THE GREAT DESIGN FOR WHICH HE DESCENDED TO THE EARTH WAS COMPLETELY FULFILLED. A solemn attestation was thus given by God to the virtue and efficacy of that great sacrifice which He offered by His death for the sins of the world. The ascension of Christ was the signal of His triumph over all the powers of darkness. II. It is, in the next place, to be viewed by us WITH RESPECT TO CHRIST HIMSELF, AS A MERITED RESTORATION TO HIS ORIGINAL FELICITY. As the Son of God, all glory belonged to Him for ever. III. In the third place, Christ ascended into heaven THAT HE MIGHT ACT THERE, IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD, AS OUR HIGH PRIEST AND INTERCESSOR. (*H. Blair, D.D.*)

The ascension of Christ:—1. This event had been foretold and typified in the Old Testament. See especially Psalms lxxviii. and cx. Moses, ascending the mount to receive the law, may be a type of Christ ascending to receive spiritual blessings for men. Elijah, taken up into heaven, and imparting a double portion of his spirit to his successor, was probably typical of Christ ascending and imparting the Pentecostal gift of the Holy Ghost. And the Jewish high priest, in passing from the holy place, which represented earth, to the most holy, which figured heaven, also foreshadowed the ascension of our Lord. 2. These predictions and types were now to be fulfilled. 3. To the top of this mountain our Saviour led His disciples, purposing to ascend visibly from thence. He might have taken His departure unseen by them, but He ascended openly, to confirm their faith in Him as the promised Messiah, to assure them of the certainty of the life in the world to come, and of their own exaltation to the place whither He had gone before. 4. The manner in which Christ was taken up from the midst of His disciples, as described in our text, was most interesting, and is worthy of our attention. In the very act of blessing them He was taken away. Oh, what a delightful consistency and loveliness of character we have in Jesus from the beginning of His mission to its close! The first assurance of His birth was accompanied by the cry of peace on earth and good-will to men; and here, He goes from the world with hands outstretched in benedictions upon those He left below. Surely if any man love not such a Saviour he deserves to be "Anathema, Maranatha." 5. But what feelings must have possessed the hearts of the disciples when they witnessed these things. 6. And where was He from whom they had been separated? His place on the eternal throne of glory had been resumed, and He sat there now not as God merely, but God-man, the great mediatorial king. 7. Such were the leading circumstances attending the ascension of our Lord. (*W. H. Lewis, D.D.*)

The ascension of Jesus:—I. THE WITNESSES OF THE ASCENSION. Only friends. Only the small band of the eleven apostles. II. THE PLACE. In the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, which had been the scene of many of our Lord's great miracles, where His most violent enemies resided, and where He had suffered death in the most public manner. Also near

Bethany, a spot sufficiently retired to permit the assemblage of the eleven without exciting the vigilance of enemies. III. THE MANNER of Christ's ascension. The ascension seems to have been slow and gentle. The apostles could therefore view it distinctly and deliberately, so that they might be assured of its reality, and be able to describe it to others. No chariot nor horses of fire were seen like those which waited the prophet Elijah to heaven; no violent whirlwind agitated the air, no blaze of glory dazzled the eyes, or overpowered the feelings of the anxious spectators. Every part of the scene accorded with the character of the mild and benevolent Jesus. Though a parting scene, there was nothing in it to terrify or depress the minds of the apostles. They were indeed surprised and filled with astonishment, but it was an astonishment which expanded, elevated, and delighted them; for we are told they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. IV. Let us next inquire WHAT REASONS CAN BE ASSIGNED FOR THE ASCENSION OF JESUS. 1. First, then, it was necessary to complete the proof of His exalted rank and Divine mission. 2. The ascension was necessary in order that the Lord Jesus should complete His mediatorial functions. 3. It was necessary that Jesus should ascend to heaven, to receive the approbation and honour from His heavenly Father, which were to be given to Him as the Mediator and Redeemer of man. V. THE BENEFITS WHICH WE MAY DERIVE FROM THE ASCENSION OF JESUS. 1. It tends to complete our faith in Him. His miracles proved His Divine power; and His prophecies, His Divine knowledge. His death proved His own declaration, "that He had power to lay down His life"; His resurrection, "that He had power to take it again." In addition, His ascension showed that all the purposes of His coming to this world were finished, that He was going to return to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was; nay, that the glory of His human nature was to be increased in a high degree. Hereby, then, is our faith in Him enlarged, strengthened, and completed, for we have full assurance of the dignity and perfection of Jesus, and that the great and benevolent purposes for which He visited this world were fully accomplished. 2. We are assured, also, as connected with the ascension of Jesus, of another event resembling it in manner, namely, the second coming of the Lord Jesus. 3. By the ascension of Jesus His promises to the righteous are fully ratified. (*J. Thomson, D.D.*) *The Lord's ascension:—*I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF OUR LORD'S ASCENSION. 1. The time. Not until after He had appeared to His disciples frequently, and conversed with them freely. He tarried with them forty days, to convince them of His resurrection, to instruct them in the knowledge of the truth, and to encourage them to steadfastness in the cause of the gospel. 2. The place of His ascension. Mount Olivet. This was a place to which He frequently resorted for secret prayer. So, also, the bed of sickness, though the believer may endure much agony there, is generally the spot whence his soul, released from trouble, ascends to the joys of heaven. 3. The ascension of Christ took place in the presence of numerous witnesses. There was no necessity for any persons being present when our Lord rose from the dead, because His appearing after His resurrection to those who knew Him before His crucifixion was a sufficient proof of His resurrection. 4. Another circumstance of which we are informed is, that this event took place while our Lord was employed in blessing the disciples. By this action He showed the strength and the duration of His affection for His disciples. 5. We are told, in Acts i. 9, that "a cloud received Him out of their sight." Clouds are frequently mentioned in Scripture as a medium through which the Lord in some degree manifested Himself to men. 6. The last circumstance we have to notice is, that our Lord's ascension was attended by angels. II. ITS ENDS, or the chief purposes for which He ascended. 1. Christ ascended in order to send down the gifts of the Holy Spirit. 2. Jesus Christ ascended into heaven in order to make intercession for His people. 3. Jesus Christ ascended in order that He might receive infinite power, happiness, and glory, as the reward of His humiliation. He is set down on His throne of glory to exercise dominion over the universe, but especially over His Church. 4. Our Lord ascended into heaven that He might prepare a place for His followers, and bring them home to Himself. III. Having considered the chief circumstances and ends of our Lord's ascension, we now come to consider, in the last place, THE PRACTICAL EFFECTS WHICH THE CONSIDERATION OF THE EVENT SHOULD PRODUCE ON US. 1. It should lead us to pay the Redeemer that Divine homage which is so justly due to His name. 2. It becomes us to rejoice on account of our Lord's ascension. 3. Our Lord's ascension should lead us unhesitatingly to trust in Him for salvation. 4. Christ's ascension should encourage us to engage with liveliness in religious exercises. 5. The consideration of our Lord's

ascension should raise our thoughts and affections to heaven. 6. Our Lord's ascension should carry forward our thoughts to His second coming. (*Jas. Foote, M.A.*) *From home to heaven* :—It seems natural to wish to pass away from this world from the place which we call our home. How many persons—when they are in search of health in the mountains of Switzerland or by the lake side, in the watering places, or bright sunny spots, where they seek to fan the dying embers of life—when they find that their end is approaching, desire to go home to die. Those who go out to India in the Civil Service have this hope before them, that they shall spend their last days in England and die at home. So it was natural that our Saviour should choose to pass away from the familiar slope of Olivet, within sight of Bethany, the nearest place to a home that the Son of Man knew during His public ministry, that from this oft-frequented haunt He should ascend to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God. (*W. Bull, B.A.*) *The parting blessing* :—He departed from them in the act of blessing; He was still blessing when the cloud received Him out of their sight. And what was this but the natural climax of all our Lord's precedent life? That life had been one of continual blessing. And before we turn from this subject of "connection," does it not seem as though heaven and earth are here represented as connected with blessing? The lark, soaring up on high, seems nevertheless to connect the skies and earth by her train of song; thus binds Christ the heaven and the earth now. There is no sight; but from the height above drops blessing—blessing for all who will take it; no less blessing on His part because it may be refused by us; blessing which shall fall upon all believers now; and which shall soak into the thirsty bosom of the millennial earth when He is owned as King of all its kings and Lord of all its lords. And with this thought of connection comes that of activity also. We have not presented before us any careful thoughts of Christ about His own glory; the activity of His mind—yea, even of His body—was all being put forth on behalf of others. We can easily imagine how comforting thoughts flowed in upon the disciples when they remembered this. He ascended into the heavens while blessing them; and, if so, what but blessing could they look for from that other world? Those who knew Him not might look up with fear and trembling, and see the Judge upon His throne. The heavens contained nothing but woe for them; but Jesus, by entering heaven in the very act of blessing, taught His people how to look up, what there to see, and what thence to expect. There is yet one more thought which presses upon our minds in connection with this parting aspect of Christ. What He dropped on them they in turn were to drop upon the world. The last impression of their Lord was to exercise its peculiar power upon their after lives; and we may be well assured that so it did. Activity in blessing marked Jesus' career to the very last; He was unwearied in well-doing. He has carried His energy with Him into heaven. Remembering, then, that all good things are given to us for others as well as for ourselves, let us use for others this word "while," in whatever teaching it conveys to our souls. Good things most truly perform their mission to us when they pass on through us to perform a ministry to others also. We never know the power of a good thing—how really good it is—until we begin to use it, to put it in the way of evolving its fragrance. (*P. B. Power, M.A.*) *Christ departs while blessing* :—Oh, what a fitting close to such a life as that of the Redeemer! He had come to bless the world, and He spent His every moment on earth in communicating blessings; and now, as though He were going within the veil to carry on the same gracious purpose, He quits the earth with extended hands, and the last words that He utters in mortal hearing are words of Divine benediction. What could be more worthy of His character? what more likely to assure and comfort His followers? It was not, you observe, when He had finished His benediction, but while He was pronouncing it, that Christ commenced His ascent; so that His departure may be said to have interrupted the blessing. And we are disposed to think that there was something in this which was designed to be pre-eminently significant. At all events, we are certain that the fact may be interpreted into lessons of general application and of no common merit. It was no proof, you see, that Christ did not love His disciples, and that He was not consulting their good, that He withdrew Himself from them. On the contrary, He was blessing them in leaving them. If there had been nothing in the departure itself from which to argue a blessing, there might have been place for suspicion; but the mode of departure irresistibly proves that Christ went away not in anger, but in tenderness. And though when anything analogous to His departure occurs it may not be possible to assure ourselves that the departing One

has left us in the act of blessing us, it cannot be unreasonable to regard the history before us as in some measure a parable, and argue from it something general. When, for example, the spiritually-minded have enjoyed seasons of communion with the Saviour—seasons most blessed, which assuredly there are, though the cold and the worldly may think it merely enthusiasm to speak of the manifestations to the soul of the invisible Mediator—and when these seasons have been followed by others of less intimate fellowship, how apt are Christians to be troubled and cast down, as though it must have been in wrath that the Redeemer withdrew the tokens of His presence! But they should rather go in thought to the Mount of Olives, and behold how Christ parts from His disciples. Oh, it is not necessarily in displeasure that the Saviour withdraws Himself. If you could see Him depart, it may be that you would behold those extended arms, and hear the lingering benediction, and thus learn that He went away only because it was expedient for you—because He could bless you better and more effectually by temporal removal than through unbroken continuance amongst you. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) *The ascension and exaltation of Christ*:—I. THE PREPARATION FOR THE ASCENSION. The small procession of Christ and the eleven apostles gradually increases till it consists of five hundred persons. They reach and climb the Mount of Olives. Then the arms which not long before had been stretched out upon the accursed tree are uplifted in prayer. A last smile He leaves for a legacy behind Him ere He quits the world—a smile involving whole oceans of meaning; and who can venture to fill up the outline, or clothe in words that blessing which He gives to His little flock whom He is leaving alone in the world? All He has to leave them is a blessing, and yet a blessing which is felt to be a shield of defence and a security in trial to them all. And, lo! while He is thus employed in blessing, the cloud that has been approaching on the breath of the gentle breeze rests on Christ's head and conceals His face, and obliterates His smile, and gathers around His uplifted arms, and surrounds His whole form and hides it from view. II. LET US FOLLOW CHRIST UPWARDS WITH THE WING OF FAITH. As through a veil, though the disciples may not see Him, He sees them, and counts their tears. He sees, too, Jerusalem itself, and perhaps weeps over it again. But night has come over the landscape. The land below fades away from His view. Olivet, the Moabite mountains, the loftiest peak of all the Sinaitic range, have disappeared, and the cloud chariot plunges amidst the stars. Orion on the south, and the Great Bear on the north, are left behind. The moon becomes Christ's footstool, and is then spurned away as He mounts higher still. Through the milky way, as through the multitudinous laughter of an ocean's billows, He pursues His course. The last star which, like a giant sentinel, keeps its solitary watch, and treads its enormous round on the verge of the universe, ceases to be seen, and the hollow and blank space which lies beyond is found to be peopled with an innumerable company of angels, who have come out to meet and to welcome their King and their Lord. And then the gates of the heavenly city appear, flaming with diamond and gold as with the lustre of ten thousand suns. From the angelic cavalcade the cry arises, "Open, ye everlasting gates, that the King of glory may enter in"; and it is met by the challenge from the walls, "Who is this King of glory?" and the reply comes, "The Lord of hosts, that is also the Man of Nazareth, the mighty in battle, He is the King of glory." And, lo! the gates fly open, and the everlasting doors are unbarred, and thus the King of glory enters in, and the Man of Nazareth, amidst the acclamation of ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, takes His seat upon the right hand of the Majesty on high. III. CONSIDER THE SPIRITUAL SENSE IN WHICH CHRIST MAY BE SAID TO HAVE ASCENDED TO BE EXALTED. 1. Christ is in the ascendant as the highest example of moral excellence. (1) No character, confessedly, can be named beside His in richness and depth, in pureness and simplicity, in dignity and truthfulness and affection. (2) No death, in grand unconsciousness, in profound submission, in absolute renunciation of self, in the spirit of forgiveness which pervades it, in its meekness, gentleness, and patience, can be named with that of Calvary. Truly said Rousseau, "If the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God." 2. Jesus is the best specimen of the risen man. No other risen man has got beyond the lowest step in the stage leading up to the footstool of the throne on which the Man of Galilee is thus exalted. 3. Christ is one the history of whose faith is the most wonderful of all histories. 4. The moral and spiritual principles which were the teaching and the glory of Christ are those on which the happiness of the world present and the prospects of the world future are felt to be dependent. In con-

clusion: 1. What a cheering doctrine is that of Christ's exaltation. God has recognized His principles as the laws of universal government. 2. Let us seek to ascend, "Excelsior." (*G. Gilfillan.*) Great joy.—*A strange joy, yet explicable*:—They had parted from their beloved Master; they had to face a trying life now, without having Him near to counsel or to help; they would never see Him again, till they died. And yet they were glad. From the place of that last earthly parting they went away, not stricken to the earth, not stunned and stupefied, as we are after the like heart-breaking wrench, but in high spirits, cheerful and elate. "They returned to Jerusalem with great joy!" Well, it is very strange. Perhaps the disciples, coming back to Jerusalem, could not easily have sorted out and explained to other people the reasons of their great joy. First, there was something very cheering about all the surroundings of Christ's departure. It was to be, the disciples knew; and the whole event was so different from what such a parting might have been. For one thing, it was so triumphant, so glorious, so miraculous, that it was proof irresistible that the work which brought the Redeemer to this world was finished successfully. And it was blessing His servants that the Redeemer left them. Sometimes, while here, He had spoken severely, and that not to His enemies only, but to His friends—to the great apostle Peter, "Get thee behind Me, Satan"; but all that was gone, and there was only kindness in the departing heart and voice. Now, as a second reason for this strange joy, let us remember that there was one great definite gain which was to come of Christ's going; and upon the enjoyment of that gain His Church was soon to enter now. The blessed Spirit, the Holy Ghost, could not come till the Saviour went; and He Himself had declared strongly that it would be gain for His disciples to lose Him if thus they received the blessed Spirit in His stead. They hardly understood, perhaps, the disciples, on the day Christ went—they did not understand, as we do now, all that the Holy Ghost would be, of light, strength, wisdom, joy, peace, strong consolation. It needed experience of His sympathy, His faithfulness, His patience, His almighty power, to make Christian people know what He is. But the disciples knew enough to make them anticipate His coming with joyful expectation; and for this reason, doubtless, among others, even from the spot where they had seen their Saviour for the last time in this life, they "returned to Jerusalem with great joy." We can think of a third reason for this joy on that parting day. It was a parting quite by itself. He went away, in visible form. It was better for His Church that He should; but, after all, He never left it. He went away, as concerns the material presence, which must be here or there. He abode yet in that Divine, real though unseen presence, which can be everywhere. Even as He departed from sight and sense, He uttered the sure and hopeful promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." He could be with the disciples He left, He can be with us day by day, as God is with us; present that is, to faith, not to sense, but as really, substantially, influentially present, as any thing or person we can touch or see. Beyond these spiritual consolations which might cheer under the departure of their Saviour, the disciples had yet another hope, which some might esteem as having something more substantial in it. Master and servants were to meet again. This same Jesus, now gone, is to come again in glory; and since that day, the Church is "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." That will be the consummation of all things. Then, all will be well at last. (*A. K. H. Boyd, D.D.*) *Joy in working for Christ*:—In a recent great European war, the soldiers of both countries, when they were ordered to the seat of war, received the order enthusiastically, and marched to the front with waving of banners and singing. The joy of the disciples when called to win the world for Christ, seem to have been similar (vers. 52, 53). If a father entrusts his son with a difficult piece of work, the boy does it joyfully and proudly. Should we have less joy in performing a great work entrusted to us by Christ? *The counterbalance*:—This statement is of more interest and importance to us than appears at first sight. It embodies a great principle; and that, one which enters continually into the Christian's life. The inward counterbalancing the outward—this is the great idea brought before us; and it will unfold itself, as we proceed to examine the circumstances under which the apostles were placed, when they thus "returned to Jerusalem with great joy." At the first glance, we should have supposed "joy" to have been the very last emotion, which, at this particular time, would have swayed the apostles' minds. We shall find no cause for it in anything outward. Nature seemed to indicate everything but joy. We should not have been surprised, had we been reading merely an ordinary narrative, to have heard that terror instead of

joy was the leading feeling in the apostles' minds. Another class of feelings, also, was calculated to arise within their breasts; and whatever emotions these were likely to be productive of, they were certainly not those of joy. The feelings which nature would have engendered under these circumstances were those of indignation and revenge. Then, there was the natural shrinking from sad associations. Were they to be affected by the outward only, almost every stone in Jerusalem would have a mournful voice for them, saying, "Here He once was, but He is gone; and His place knoweth Him now no more." But there were other and higher influences at work; there must have been, for we read, not of resignation, but of joy; and not only of joy, but of "great joy"; and to produce this, there must have been a great counterbalancing principle within the heart. The actual feeling of the apostles was that of "great joy"; and whence this great joy came we can easily see. All doubts were now removed. Coldly and damply, unbelief, from time to time, had struck in upon them; but it was now dispelled for ever. The veil's last fold was removed from their eyes; and they now stood forth upon firm ground, prepared to meet the world in the power of clear, inward light. Wherever there is full, clear, unclouded faith, and that in unhindered exercise—there, there is joy, and all the power that flows forth from a light and joyous heart. The disciples had seen also the exaltation of the One they loved. Moreover, they had now a union with the unseen. We can understand how a new light was now thrown on all old scenes; how a new destiny lay outstretched before the disciples' eyes; how they felt that they had that which the world had not given, and which the world, therefore, could not take away; and, rich in all this, they turned from the place whence their Lord had ascended up on high, "leading captivity captive," and re-sought the place where He had been bound, and led as a lamb to the slaughter; all tears now wiped from their eyes, and their hearts filled with "great joy." Here, then, was the power of the inward to counterbalance the outward; and what says it to us as regards our own experiences? First of all it says: As with the disciples, so also with you; look not always for a change in the outward aspect of things, but look for the introduction of a new element therein, modifying, compensating, supporting, as the case may be. The outward remains unmoved; but it is met by the inward which pervades it, and puts forth its more than compensating power; there is, as the apostle says in 1 Thess. i., "much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." And now, with regard to ourselves. What is the power of the inward with us? In the first place, have we an inward living power within us which exercises an unmistakeable influence; and can compensate, energize, or support, as circumstances may require? It is surely impossible to have this without knowing it, there are so many circumstances which are calculated to call it into exercise, and in which, if it existed, it must have acted. Have we a felt and realized union with God, which influences us, so that we feel we have something which the world cannot see; and which, indeed, is not of the world at all? Our perceptions may be more or less vivid on these points, but have we a perception, so that there is as distinct an inward life as there is an outward? Moreover, are we conscious of how this "inward" has acted? Have we felt when disappointed of earthly things, or in them, that, after all, there was nothing unduly to depress us: for that we had something else of infinitely more importance, in which we could not be disappointed? When darkness closed in upon us in the outward world, have we had distinct inward light, in which we could move, and see, and rejoice? When called upon to sacrifice any of the "outward," have we been enabled to do so because it was as nothing compared with the "inward"—the possession of which soothed and comforted us, and kept us from being down-trodden by poverty, and being made to feel ourselves miserably poor? Let the believer also never be a gloomy man. If ever any men on earth had cause for gloom the apostles had, when they returned to Jerusalem; but they returned with "great joy." Let us not be gloomy in the world or to the world; let us show it that we have something more than it has. Perhaps men will believe that faith is a real power when they see it able to do something; when, acting from within, it can make us cheerful in times of sadness, and contented in times of reverse and poverty, and patient in times of weariness and pain, and ever hopeful for the future—our horizon being, not the valley of the shadow of death, but the glorious land which lies beyond. And who knows whether, thus looking beyond this earth, we may not lead others to ask whereon our eyes are fixed, and, it may be, that they also will look onward and upward and join us on our way. One Adrianus, in ancient times, seeing the martyrs suffer such grievous things in the cause of Christ, asked, "What is that which enables them to bear such sufferings?" Then he was told

of the "inward" counterbalancing the "outward"; for one of them replied, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." And thus was Adrianus won not only to conversion, but to martyrdom also, for he laid down his life manfully for Christ. (*P. B. Power, M.A.*) Continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.—*Christian worship*:—I. THE OBJECT OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP. 1. A human Christ. 2. A living Christ. 3. A glorified Christ. 4. A crucified Christ. II. THE PLACE OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP. "The temple." Where two or three are met together in Christ's name. III. THE TIME OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP. "Continually." Every day. No opportunity of doing homage to the Saviour should be missed. IV. THE FORM OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP. "Praising and blessing God." Magnifying His mercy, and speaking good of His name. V. THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP. "With great joy." The Christian rejoices in the Saviour's exaltation—1. For Christ's sake. Reward of redeeming work. 2. For his own sake. A pledge and guarantee of his acceptance and salvation. 3. For the world's sake. (*T. Whitelaw, M.A.*) *Earnestness in using means of grace*:—"Continually in the temple!" Observe that! The disciples were now thoroughly assured that they had an Advocate in the heavenly temple, but this did not withdraw them from the earthly. On the contrary, they seem to have resorted with greater frequency to the courts of the Lord's house, well convinced, by the circumstance of their Master's departure, that they had an Advocate with God, and we may be sure that there is something radically wrong when a sense of the privileges of Christianity produces listlessness, and does not produce earnestness in the use of Christian ordinances. He is not a strong Christian who feels that he can do without sermons and sacraments, any more than it is the appetite of an energetic man, when there is no relish for food. It is no sign of good faith or well-grounded hope that the Christian seems beyond needing the means of grace; as well might you think it a sign of knowledge and security against shipwreck that the mariner was above consulting his chart or making observations. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." (*H. Melville, B.D.*)

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